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S. REXFORD BLACK

PRIVATE AND STATE FORESTRY IN CALIFORNIA

1917-1960

An Interview Conducted by

Amelia R. Fry

Berkeley

1968

Produced Under the Auspices of
Forest History Society



S. Rexford Black, 1945

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FOREWORD

This interview is part of a series produced by the Regional Oral History Office of Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, under a grant from the Forest History Society, whose funding was made possible by the Hill Family Foundation. Transcripts in the series consist of interviews with: DeWitt Nelson, retired head of the Department of Natural Resources, California; William R. Schofield, lobbyist for timber owners, California Legislature; Rex Black, also lobbyist for timber owners, California Legislature; Walter F. McCulloch, retired Dean of the School of Forestry, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon; Thornton Munger, retired head of U.S. Forest Service Experiment Station, Pacific Northwest Region; Leo Isaac, retired, genetics research in the U.S. Forest Service Experiment Station, Pacific Northwest Region; and Walter Lund, retired chief, Division of Timber Management, Pacific Northwest Region. Copies of the manuscripts are on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; The Department of Special Collections, University of California at Los Angeles; and the Forest History Society, Yale University.

Interviews done for the Forest History Society under other auspices include: Emanuel Fritz, professor of forestry, University of California, Berkeley, with funding from the California Redwood Association; and a forest genetics series on the Eddy Tree Breeding

Station with tapes by W. C. Cumming, A. R. Liddicoet, and N. T. Mirov, currently funded by the Forest History Society Oral History Program.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in the history of the West. The Office is under the administrative supervision of the Director of the Bancroft Library.

Willa Klug Baum, Head
Regional Oral History Office

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S. R. BLACK

Graduated Flint, Michigan High School June, 1911

Buick Motor Company Fall 1911 to Fall 1912

Graduated University of Michigan, B.S.F. June 1916

U. S. Forest Service, Santa Barbara Nat. Forest June 1916 to Feb. 1917

Marin Municipal Water District, Mill Valley, Calif. in charge of fire control on Mt. Tamalpais and watersheds of Water District Feb. 1917 to Oct. 1917

Enlisted in 20th Engineers, U. S. Army, Oct. 1917
Discharged at Walter Reed Hospital, June 1919

Buick Motor Co., Flint, Michigan, July 1919 to Spring 1921

Southern Oregon - Northern California Pine Beetle Control as office manager at Klamath Falls, Oregon, Spring 1921 to Spring 1924.
Also in charge of field work for U. S. Forest Service Spring 1923 to end of project in Spring 1924.

Secretary-Manager, California Forest Protective Association, San Francisco, Spring 1924 to Fall 1943.

During the last one and one-half years I was employed by the C.F.P.A. I was also employed part time by the Michigan-California Lumber Co. and also by the California White and Sugar Pine Association. (All employers were fully aware of these arrangements)
Chairman, California State Board of Forestry 1934-1937.

Vice-President, Weyerhaeuser Sales Company, St. Paul, Minn. 1943 to 1947

1947 - Georgia Hardwood Lumber Co., Augusta, Georgia. Later changed to Georgia-Pacific Co. Moved to West Coast as Senior Vice President of Georgia-Pacific in charge of operations at Olympia and Bellingham, Wash. and operations at Springfield and Toledo, Oregon.

Resigned from Georgia-Pacific Dec. 31, 1953, and with friends built and operated as Vice President and General Manager the Tri-State Plywood Company at Santa Clara, California.

Sold plant in 1960 and retired

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INTRODUCTION

S. Rexford Black is a graduate forester from the University of Michigan ('16) who, after a stint in the U.S. Forest Service, became the Executive Secretary of the California Forest Protective Association (CFPA) in 1924, providing imaginative and free-wheeling leadership in that post until 1943. This span of years saw vast changes in the timber industry and unprecedented development in government forestry. Black, as the head of the organization of land owners who owned from seventy to eighty percent of the commercial timberlands in the state, was in the crucial place, and at just the right time, for his type of leadership to influence the future of the timber industry and state forestry in California.

Black's job as head of CFPA consisted primarily of promoting public awareness of the danger of forest fires, contributing to the development of better fire protection on industry lands, and lobbying on behalf of CFPA. The trade organization's primary concerns in the Legislature were usually focussed on obtaining larger appropriations for the starving State Division of Forestry, to enable it to increase the protection of the valuable timberlands. Black also lost no opportunity to lobby in support of a more feasible tax structure for new-growth timberlands. A portion of his legislative assignment was watchdogging, as well, for bills that might increase timber taxes, and for congressional or legislative moves that threatened to place forest practices under government control.

In addition, Black's leadership produced some of the early CFPA achievements in forestry, many of them financed by federal Clarke-McNary rebates to CFPA. Through Black's efforts, CFPA instigated experiments and demonstrations of mechanical spark arresters on locomotives and donkey engines in the woods. About five tank trucks were purchased for strategic locations in the mountains, a big step that permitted fires to be fought with water in the forests. Also, it was largely through Black's efforts that stand-by fire-suppression crews, paid monthly by the state, were instituted. This had become a critical need when, in the depths of the Depression, the desperate jobless sometimes started incendiary fires in order to have a few hours or days of income from fire fighting.

By today's standards the times were difficult indeed: most timber companies were living on a thin margin of occasional profits, often enduring losses that could be recouped only from diminishing capital reserves. One big fire season in a dry California summer could wipe out a company. Financial justification of long-range forest management planning was only becoming apparent to a few companies and did not become widely feasible until the end of Black's secretaryship.

In addition, the various government agencies and timber owners

were caught in a long struggle for a viable delineation of zones of responsibility for fire protection of all wildlands in California: the State Division of Forestry and the counties each wanted control of the county fire warden setup: the private owners wanted a larger portion of fire protection taken over by the Forest Service and by the State Division of Forestry: the Division, in turn, was pressed by southern California interests to step up protection of the chaparral lands there. It was a busy and crucial time for Rex Black and his Association if they were to see that any final resolution of a master fire plan sufficiently took into account the needs and interests of private timber ownership.

The dispersal of the johnny-come-lately Clarke-McNary federal reimbursements for fire protection was also in a nebulous state. This was a system designed to allot federal subsidies to state treasuries on the basis of the amount of money expended by each state for fire protection of timberlands. However, the day when the allotment was given directly to the state for dispersal according to its own formula had not yet arrived. Black's aggressive ingenuity had wrested from the Forest Service in Washington a considerable quantity of Clarke-McNary rebates to be awarded each year to the CFPA on the basis of the total state compulsory fire patrol fees which CFPA members had had to pay into State coffers.* At that time, this arrangement was the timber owners' main line of defense against further funds going into protection of the brushlands of southern California. It was not an unorthodox arrangement for the Thirties; at least one other timber owners' organization, in the state of Washington, enjoyed the receipt of annual Clarke-McNary funds, as did some of the larger companies, such as Michigan-California, who operated their own fire control systems at considerable expense.

The diligent Black was usually immersed in extra-curricular projects simultaneous with his rather formidable tasks in CFPA. For several years, he was part-time forest engineer for the California White and Sugar Pine Association, and in the early Forties was employed part time by the Michigan-California Lumber Company. Also, in the darkest years of the Depression, his initiative forged the State Labor Camp system, largely through his friend, the powerful State Director of Finance, Rolland A. Vandegrift. This was a kind of pre-Rooseveltian CCC and led to Black's being called to Washington as a consultant in the earliest formulations of CCC legislation. It is one of the forester's

*For a more thorough discussion of the CFPA Clarke-McNary "kitty," see C. Raymond Clar's upcoming book, Forestry and California State Government, to be printed by the California Office of State Printing. That volume, which is a sequel to his California Government and Forestry--From Spanish Days to 1927, includes comprehensive information on all major topics touched upon in this interview.

most noteworthy successes.

Another "outside" job was that of chairman of the State Board of Forestry. Governor Rolph appointed Black to the Board in May, 1932, and he was immediately elected chairman of that body (a position he retained after Rolph died and was succeeded by Lt. Governor Merriam in 1934). What followed under Black's chairmanship were the sensational attempts (though not the first ones) to unseat State Forester M. B. Pratt, for if the Depression was a momentous problem to the timber owners, the State Forester ranked a close second. While Black's efforts never quite succeeded, they did bring to public attention some of the issues that culminated with Pearl Harbor almost a decade later in the reorganization of the State Board of Forestry, a new State Forester, and a workable, well-financed fire plan for the entire state. Meanwhile, most timbermen in CFPA, who owned lands in the higher elevations in northern California, highly resented the State Forester dispersing fire control funds to the brush-land counties, which were just as flammable, to be sure, and, around thickly-settled Los Angeles, a never-ending threat to the solvency of those county governments.

What followed under Black's chairmanship is partially recounted in the interview and in the newsclippings in the Appendix. Four months after Black's appointment to the Board, he had convinced Governor Rolph that the State Forester was not only a weak administrator but--and this may have been an even worse sin--had campaigned against the Governor. Rolph agreed that Pratt should go. However, one month later the Governor changed his mind, thanks to the powerful intervention on Pratt's behalf of the chairman of the Conservation Committee of the California Chamber Commerce, whose political backing could ably compete with Black's. Pratt was saved until the next attempt at removal.

Still chairman of the State Board of Forestry, Black tried a coup d'etat technique in December of 1934 by mustering enough votes on the Board--from those present at the meeting--to oust Pratt. That evening Governor Merriam actually handed Black's friend, William Schofield, the appointment as new State Forester, and success seemed in hand. However brilliant these maneuvers were, they did not anticipate Mrs. Pratt's midnight trip by riverboat down the Sacramento and her hurried appeals to a few key people in San Francisco (no one today knows exactly who). The next morning, Governor Merriam quietly asked Schofield to please return the appointment. Black found that once again a governor had changed his mind.*

Black and company were not exactly alone in their sentiments about Pratt; the head of the U.S. Forest Service in California privately felt that the State Forester was an ineffectual administrator unable to cope

*See Schofield, William R., "Forestry, Lobbying, and Resource Legislation," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Amelia Fry, University of California Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, (Berkeley, 1968).

with conflicting pressures. "Poor, weak sister Pratt," he called him.** In spite of Pratt's noble efforts to promote good forestry by instituting a state nursery, his failure to cope adequately with the competing pressures for fire protection made him vulnerable to repeated attempts at his ouster. However, it should be remembered that the low, pre-Pearl Harbor appropriations eeked out for the Division's activities made it necessary to combine state and county resources for fire protection. Such an arrangement led to a position of harrassment of the State Forester: each county Board of Supervisors in the state continuously pressed for a larger proportion of state funds for fire protection and absolute control over the appointment of county fire wardens. The effective administration by the State Forester, so desired by Pratt's critics, was virtually impossible as long as the state had to depend on the counties for part of the fire protection funding.

However, it was this same position of close communication with the county governments and their political structures that enabled Pratt to survive the several attempts at his ouster. When Black pitted his considerable skill and political power (which apparently funneled through Vandegrift) against the State Forester's, Pratt's broad state constituency proved to be the stronger, built up as it was through the county fire warden system.

The denouement after the abortive 1934 coup is not clear. It appears that the Board was in a state of suspended animation for as much as two and a half years, or until Merriam made up the first appointments to his own Board, replacing Black with Arnold Kunody. At any rate, if the Board held any meetings, records of them cannot be found either in Berkeley or in Sacramento. C. Raymond Clar, State Division of Forestry historian, surmised in a telephone conversation that perhaps the quietus was caused by Governor Merriam "dumping the whole problem of Pratt" by having Director of Natural Resources Nordenholt tell the Board not to meet. However, Black himself says he cannot remember the Board NOT meeting. "If I had remained as chairman," he wrote in a letter last November, "you may be sure I would have held meetings of the Board." (For the benefit of future scholars who may want to search for further documentation of the 1935-37 Board, the members were Swift Berry, who was one of Black's most faithful CFPB Board members, B. A. McAllaster, Charles S. Howard, H. S. Gilman, Ernest G. Dudley, and E. Walton Hedges.)

This tireless campaign against Pratt led to one of the Society of American Forester's first formal investigations, and the expulsion of Black in 1935. Prior to this, the judicial role of the young Society had been bubbling about in a nebulous way for several years, particularly in states in which the state forester's job was a non-professional

**See Show, S. B., "National Forests in California," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Amelia Fry, University of California Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, (Berkeley, 1965).

political appointment subject to change with each governor. In a few states, a well-qualified State Forester had lost his job through "politics," and whether the SAF should intervene on behalf of a member in such cases was a lively issue in the Society. In Black's case, the issues evolved more around Black's imaginative political techniques--which he displayed in a dazzling variety in his attempts to oust the State Forester--than the question of whether the State Forester was worthy of his post.

It is interesting that although the seven charges against Black and the ensuing SAF president's rather quiet investigation are a matter of record, there is little record of the defense of Black in the copious papers of the SAF Director, Emanuel Fritz, now in the Bancroft Library. The SAF Journal mentions only that CFPA members Swift Berry and Richard Colgan sent in pro-Black statements. (See Appendix.) Black himself remembers little of how it actually happened. Indeed, he is almost an invisible participant in the whole affair, neither having appeared in person before the directors, having sent a representative, nor having sent names of persons to corroborate his own reply of July 18.

The decision to expell Black caused a small earthquake in California, where several distressed SAF members came close to forming a separate professional society. In addition--and probably as a result of Berry's and Colgan's efforts, among others--counter charges against SAF President H. H. Chapman were presented to the Council for a second investigation, headed by Sam Dana. Chapman was exonerated but the whole affair resulted in the formulation of disciplinary procedures to be henceforth followed by the Society.

It was not until 1948 that the SAF adopted its Code of Ethics, so that the most opaque quandary throughout the Black inquiry was the meaning of "ethical behavior." Black feels strongly that a forester in Pratt's position who does not adequately promote good forestry is more damaging to the profession than any citizen-forester who tries to oust him, by whatever means seem reasonable at the time. At any rate, Black was apparently reinstated in SAF around 1937.

Black's experience in CFPA, plus his part-time job with Michigan-California Lumber Company and the California White and Sugar Pine Association, finally led to a new position in 1943, that of Vice-President of Weyerhaeuser Sales Company at St. Paul, Minneapolis. This led to a similar position with Georgia Harwood Lumber Company, later Georgia-Pacific. Late in 1953, the inexhaustible Mr. Black resigned once more to begin a new career: joining with friends to set up the Tri-State Plywood Company at Santa Clara, California. In Tri-State, he was able to put to use many of his ideas in public relations and personnel management until he sold the plant and retired in 1960.

Mr. Black and I tape-recorded these three sessions in the quiet hospitality of his Palo Alto home in 1966, on February 2, March 1, and March 10. As a retired man, he had settled down to enjoy a rich social life with friends whom the Blacks had collected over a long period of years. A furniture repair project on the hall table was proof that grandchildren were encouraged to come and romp with grandfather as often as possible. His wife--who, while secretary to Rolland Vandegrift, was met, wooed, and married by Black--is a charming and capable woman who made every effort to protect our privacy during the taping sessions and to offer help with names and sequence of events when needed.

Rex Black is a forceful man with all the physical characteristics of a leader: height, a persuasive voice, and expressive eyes. He becomes totally immersed in the point he is making as well as in the task at hand, which is one reason it is difficult for him to remember the details of the fast-moving, tumultuous days of a career of three decades ago. His dedication to forestry is apparent in his remarks in the transcript; a similar dedication to getting down in written form a history of private forestry efforts in California led to his sponsoring a taping session with his friend, Dick Colgan, forester for Diamond Match Company.*

As we talked, his words tumbled out in sentences that started in measured cadences, then increased in tempo, sometimes diminishing to a stage-whisper. As he tried to emphasize the opposition's tactics, or the significance of his own, the interviewer was treated to his style of persuasion: forceful delivery often punctuated with a sharp tap on table top or microphone.

In editing the transcript, the interviewer, with the assistance of Evelyn Fairburn, put the topics in logical order and checked through for ambiguities, inserting additional questions on minor points. The manuscript was then sent to Black, who checked it over and made few changes except to answer the questions.

In Sacramento, Raymond Clar, who at the time was deep in the task of writing a history of these years in the California Division of Forestry, gave able assistance on points which had escaped Black's memory and which had not shown up in resource material available on the Berkeley campus. The bulging Appendix is made up of mementoes and clippings from Rex Black's files, other newsclippings obtained by William Schofield, and pertinent notes and correspondence of the interviewer: one more proof of the willingness of Black and others to set the record straight.

January, 1969

Amelia Fry
Interviewer

*See Colgan, Richard, "Forestry in the California Pine Region," typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Amelia Fry, University of California Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, (Berkeley, 1966).

BACKGROUND AND EARLY YEARS

Schooling and Work

Fry: We might as well start with that grandfather that you told me about before the tape recorder was on, and tell what he did for higher education in Michigan.

Black: My grandfather, whose name was Simeon Rexford Billings, lived on his farm ten miles from Flint, and was a state senator. He introduced the bill providing for a land grant college in Michigan, which was then Michigan Agricultural College and now is Michigan State University. As I understand it, it was the first land grant college in the United States.

Fry: Did you know this grandfather?

Black: Very well.

Fry: You were born in Michigan?

Black: I was born in Flint, Michigan. I was told it was on April 30 in 1894.

Fry: [Laughter] You sound doubtful.

Black: The records seem to bear it out; naturally I don't remember it. I attended the schools in Flint, Michigan, graduated from high school in 1911, spent the next year and one summer working at the Buick Motor Company to earn funds to help pay my way in college. I graduated from the University of Michigan Forestry School in 1916, leaving there in May before graduation date for a job in California with the Forest Service as a fire guard on the Santa Barbara National Forest, with headquarters at Saugus, California.

Fry: What did your father do? Was he involved in the new car industry?

Black: My father was an attorney, and later a judge, which in Flint

Black: was called a circuit judge; in California it is a "superior judge." He held that position for a great many years, and actually was re-elected to a six-year term when he was eighty-six years old, which indicates that he must have been well thought of.

Fry: But you didn't choose to go into law?

Black: My brother took up forestry, and he persuaded me that that was the coming thing. At that time there was a whole lot of talk in the country about the sad shape that forestry was in. So I took up forestry.

Fry: This was in 1911, which was right after President Taft had fired Pinchot. Did this public controversy influence you any?

Black: I presume it did indirectly. I think my brother was the one that actually influenced me. So I went to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1912 and graduated in '16.

Fry: At that time, I guess most of the jobs in forestry were with the Forest Service.

Black: Yes, they were.

Fry: So this must have been what you were looking toward in college.

Black: Presumably it was. In the summer of 1913, I took a job in a logging camp in northern Michigan to get a little experience.

Fry: Was this with a large logging firm?

Black: It was with the Greenwood Lumber Company, which was a sizeable logging concern, near the shores of Lake Superior. Three others of the University of Michigan forestry students were there at the same time.

Fry: What did you do?

Black: I was a swamper, swung an ax, chopped limbs off the trees. I worked all through the summer, until school started.

Fry: I'd like to get an idea of the working conditions in the logging camp, how long you worked and so forth.

Black: I had taken a tent that we had in our family, and the four of us from the university slept in the tent, but we ate in the cook house with the other loggers. The food was good, although

Black: the flies were pretty thick, and there were times when sanitation might have been improved. I have no complaints about our treatment, which was very good. And while the work was a little tough, I thought it was a fine experience.

Fry: How long was a working day?

Black: Ten hours. You took an hour to walk to work and an hour back, so you were gone from camp about twelve hours.

Then I was hooker for the jammer; in other words, this was a steam machine that reeled in the cable that lifted the logs from the ground over a boom and put them on the cars: I had the hook on a rope at one end of a log and a man that knew what he was doing put a hook in the other end. That was one of the best jobs because as soon as you ran out of cars you were through for the day; and the cars varied, so sometimes there'd be only six or eight hours supply and sometimes there'd be ten. That was a real good job.

Fry: Wasn't this one of the jobs that had a rather high accident rate at the time?

Black: No. There were very few people hurt that summer while I was there. One man was carrying a double-bitted ax on his shoulder and caught it on a branch and it clipped him behind the ear and he bled a little bit. That was the only accident to the boys of the university.

Fry: This job, then, did not make you want to change your mind, and you continued at the University of Michigan?

Black: It probably should have, but it didn't.

Fry: At the University of Michigan at that time, were there any particular professors who stand out in your mind?

Black: There was Philbert Roth, who was the head of the forestry school; he was a wonderful man.

Fry: Did you get to have any classes with him?

Black: Yes. In my senior year only. There was P. S. Lovejoy, who had been a supervisor in the U.S. Forest Service. He was a very interesting man. Those are the two that stand out in my mind. Of course we took many courses that weren't strictly forestry--mineralogy, crystallography, various other sciences. All in all, it was a very satisfactory experience.

Fry: Could you tell us more about what sort of a teacher Roth was?

Black: In the first place, he was a remarkable man. You had all the confidence in the world that anything he said was absolutely true. He was dedicated to his work. I think he was an inspiration to most of the boys that were there. Other than that I can't think of anything particularly.

Fry: What about Lovejoy?

Black: Lovejoy was a very interesting individual, a little eccentric in some ways. But he could tell his actual experiences in the Forest Service, which were always interesting, especially as he told them. And he made it look like a very desirable life.

Fry: You don't remember any of his stories, do you, that you could pass on?

Black: No, I don't.

The second summer, 1914, I worked for Buick again, for more money. In the summer of 1915 I got a job as fire guard on the Olympic National Forest in Washington. I left school to get to California by the first of May, 1916. This meant a drop of one grade in each subject but the average was high enough to get my degree in absentia in June. I went directly from Ann Arbor to Santa Barbara, and then to Saugus, California, as fire guard. Later, when the ranger was injured in an auto wreck, I was put in charge of his ranger district.

Fry: What did you do in the Olympic National Forest?

Black: I was a fire guard, on foot, in the mountains.

Fry: This didn't mean sitting up in a little lookout?

Black: I was not in a lookout. This was up hill and down hill through the mountains, covering the trails primarily for fishermen and then in the fall for hunters. We had only three fires, none of which was large. That job gave me the experience of catching my first salmon with my hands, which made it very interesting. I'd heard about it, but I actually had a chance to prove it could be done. You throw rocks into the pool and the salmon scare and go into the shallow water, the ripples, and you run in after them and grab them.

Fry: I wanted to ask you what a fire guard did when he found fishermen and hunters.

Black: He warned them about fires and to please be careful; and if they'd left fires he'd put them out. I found one which was burning that had been left. Incidentally, a packer that had come down past there told me about it. My total beat was twenty miles long, up the Elwha River.

Fry: How much authority did you have? In other words, did you really have some kind of legal sanctions you could bring to bear on these people if they were careless?

Black: I don't suppose so, except to report them to the ranger in Port Angeles by telephone. But there was no trouble. The people that would walk or rent horses and ride up twenty miles from the nearest road to fish were already pretty well educated as far as being woodsmen was concerned. They enjoyed it and they were careful. There was only the one accident that I know of, and I think that was due to the fact that the campfire had been built in what looked like a safe place but it caught in a root down underneath somewhere and it crept out further than they expected. At least it looked like that to me.

Fry: That would be considered an extremely good record in these days.

Black: Yes, but there were very few people up there. Later on in the fall there were deer hunters around; they were very careful. At that time I was transferred from the Elwha River to another place not far from Crescent Lake. Most of the hunters would camp in my front yard, so to speak, and do their hunting out of there. So they didn't have other campfires, and there were no forest fires in that area at that time.

Fry: Do you think that one of the reasons that one didn't get too excited about fire prevention early was that the people who used the forests then were much better educated in the ways of using them than they were later on?

Black: I think that's likely true. There was practically no automobile travel. The only automobiles in the Elwha region were Model T Fords, except one. The bus line was a Stanley Steamer. But there was no great influx of city people without training. You had to be a real ardent fisherman or hunter to go that far. Those who didn't happen to be serious fishermen went closer to home than most of these people.

Fry: Then you went back and had your senior year at school in 1915-16?

Black: That's right.

Forestry Employment and World War I

Fry: You must have taken the Forest Service examination some time.

Black: No, I never took any Forest Service examination. I did not need one for any of the jobs I held after the war. From my job on Mt. Tamalpais I went with the California Forest Protective Association. From there with Weyerhaeuser, then to Georgia Pacific. I had mainly private forestry activities.

I think that some of the best foresters in the country worked for private industry; I know one of them up here at Chico, Dick Colgan, who was with the Diamond Match. Last Labor Day I went with him in a car over some of their cut over land that had been cut for the third time. And there is more standing timber on that ground now than there was when the company first bought the timber a long, long time ago. That's pine. To my mind, he did the best job for private forestry that has been done in the state of California.*

Fry: Why don't you start now with your first experience after school, after you were through college.

Black: I was on the Santa Barbara Forest as a fire guard in 1916. We had a number of fires there. Some of them were very large, covering thousands of acres. Normally in putting them out you had a shovel and covered the edge of the fire with dirt; you followed it on each side from where it started with two men. On the big fires, we took the hoboes and transients off the freight trains in the town of Saugus and brought them out to the fire line, gave them something to eat, and they handled

*Colgan, Richard. Typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Amelia Fry, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project. (Berkeley, 1968) In Bancroft Library.

Black: the shovels. Some of them worked and some of them didn't. We had one fire on the border of the Angeles National Forest on which I was on the Santa Barbara side. There were mostly people from the Angeles Forest. It was a pretty good size--took two or three days--but it was still a shovel and brush hook job, covering up the edge of the fire with dirt.

Going to Mt. Tamalpais in February, 1917, we were very fortunate. We had no fires that summer of any consequence on the mountain proper. But there was a fire over closer to the coast, and the manager of our water district sent me over to put it out. To me that was a wonderful experience, because I took with me the foreman and his ditch-digging crew, who were used to pick and shovel work. They were all Italians. We went over in the afternoon to put out the fire. I asked about water, and the foreman of the crew told me, "These boys aren't interested in drinking water. You get some red wine." I said, "Hell, nobody's going to pay for red wine on a fire line. I never heard of such a thing."

He said, "If you want any dirt thrown around here you'd better get the red wine."

So I bought two 2 1/2 gallon wicker-covered jugs of red wine and we went out to the fire line. That was the best fire crew I ever had. They really worked. We got the fire out that night, and that was it. I turned in my bill to the board of supervisors. (In the first place, I'd had to pay the men myself, out of my personal account, after the fire was out.) I turned in my bill to the County, including the wine, specified as wine, and the bill was paid without any question. Fortunately that was before Prohibition, or perhaps my crew wouldn't have been such good fire fighters.

Fry: Did you use wine as a stimulant for better fire fighting later on?

Black: I think that was the last fire that I ever operated on individually, or was in charge of. But I got the idea. I still keep red wine in case a fire breaks out somewhere. [Laughter]

Fry: Just in case one comes along, be prepared. I guess this was when there were more wineries in Marin County than there are now.

Black: There were plenty of wineries in the area.

Fry: It was a kind of way of life.



Treating bug-infested trees

Black: It was a way of life. That's the way they lived. These were not lumbermen; these were the ditch diggers. And they were a fine bunch of men. The whole bunch of them were Italian. In fact, when they were talking, I didn't know what they were talking about. They spoke Italian, but they really worked.

Fry: What did you do after your Mt. Tamalpais job?

Black: I went into the Army. At the end of the fire season I enlisted with the Twentieth Engineers.

Fry: What was the date?

Black: That was 1917. I think it was about the end of September. Anyway, after the first rain came, I left.

Fry: The Twentieth Engineers was the second bunch of foresters that went overseas.

Black: That's right, the second division; we went to France, Company F, 4th Battalion, 20th Engineers. Captain Phipps was our captain. The first lieutenant was Sommerset. I do not remember their first names.

While I was there I was recommended for officer's training camp, but instead I got the 'flu and went to hospitals, where I remained for nine months. I was in Base Six hospital in Bordeaux, France, for three months, left on Christmas day to come back to the States, and went into Walter Reed Hospital, and got out in-- I believe it was June, 1919.

Fry: Was this a medical discharge?

Black: I don't know what it was. The war was over and I'd lost the hearing of one ear. I was so happy to get out I don't think I ever looked at the discharge to see what it said.

Pine Beetle Control Project

Fry: You have told me, before the tape recorder was on, that at this point you felt that you had to give up your forestry career, due to this hearing loss.

Black: Yes, I felt that I would be lost in the woods; that is, if I depended upon sound to find people, I wouldn't be able to locate them. So I went back home to Flint and worked for Buick as factory paymaster, from July, 1919, to the spring of 1921.

Fry: How did you hear of the pine beetle control job?

Black: George Long, Jr. was in the army with me, and he's the one who told me about the bug job. He was in Tacoma. His father was the general manager of Weyerhaeuser timber company; his company was the major one of the private timber owners in that area that was interested in killing bugs. And when he heard that T. D. Woodbury of San Francisco was going to pick the man, he told me about it.

I thought that being an office job, I took it. I asked for it and got it, in the spring of 1921. But I again had trouble with my hearing in the woods; we had these crews scattered around in the woods--that was when I took over W. B. Durbin's work. If I would hear the ax, or if they kept on hammering on the wedge or sawing I could tell where they were; I could turn the ear to the loudest noise and I could go there. But when they stopped I couldn't tell where they were. So I would never have been any good in a cruising job or one scattered around the woods.

Fry: This job was under the Clarke-McNary Act funds?

Black: Yes. I've forgotten the amount of the funds: it was quite a bit.

Fry: For both southern Oregon and northern California?

Black: That's right: Southern Oregon-Northern California Pine Beetle Control Project.

Fry: And you were controlling pine beetles in both states, under the special provisions of this appropriations act?

Black: That's right.

Fry: Were you working primarily for the Forest Service?

Black: I was working for all three agencies that first year. Then when Mr. Durbin wanted to get back to his job as forest supervisor of the Modoc Forest, he recommended that I take over his work and the rest of them agreed, so I did.

Fry: And these three agencies were the Indian Service--

Black: Yes. The Indian Service, the Forest Service, and the private owners.

Fry: Did this in effect give you three bosses instead of one?

Black: I had three bosses to start with.

Fry: In the first year?

Black: Yes. In the second year I still had the other two. I was more or less my own boss on the Forest Service from the spring of 1923 until the end of the project in the spring of 1924.

Black: I received some increase in salary when I took that over, and they gave me the title of Forest Supervisor, which was purely because of the salary involved, I think.

Fry: I understand the area covered more than just one forest.

Black: There were three national forests involved: the Klamath, the Modoc, and the Fremont.

Fry: It would be interesting to know how you went about this business of killing off the bugs.

Black: We worked during the season when logging camps were not active; in other words, it was the winter season, when the bugs were dormant, when they were in the bark of the trees. The procedure was to fell the tree, saw it down, chop the bark off and burn it. The bark was peeled from the top and sides of the fallen tree, and piled under it and set on fire, which killed the beetles on the lower side of the tree where it could not be readily peeled. That was done when there was no danger of fire, of course, being in the winter. We were able to get the loggers, who were seasonal workers, up there, so far as their normal activity was concerned. We had fine crews and good men; camps of about twenty to twenty-five people per camp scattered around so they could walk back and forth to work.

Fry: What was the result?

Black: It was very successful. And they still use that method.

Fry: So the infestation was controlled?

Black: Greatly decreased. I would not say completely controlled. We still have them in the state. But I think they follow the same procedure in control. My roommate happened to be Paul Keen (a graduate of the University of California) of the Bureau of Entomology, who was in charge of the technical work.

Fry: Was that Oregon or California?

Black: His headquarters were in California, which was the headquarters for the Pacific coast Bureau of Entomology.

Fry: Did you work rather closely with Keen as he furnished the scientific information?

Black: He furnished the technical information, and we did what he told us. He was a very competent man, considered the best in the organization, I believe. We renewed our friendship when I moved to San Francisco and he to Berkeley.

Fry: Was this a temporary job when you took it?

Black: Yes, for just as long as the appropriation lasted. Because I saw the end coming in the wintertime, I applied for another job in Hawaii, and was accepted.

Fry: This was doing what in Hawaii?

Black: Assistant superintendent of parks and forests.

Fry: I don't think you quite got to Hawaii, did you?

Black: No, I stopped in to thank Mr. Woodbury for having gotten me the job of killing pine beetles and he told me about a possible job in San Francisco, which appealed to me more than going to Hawaii. So you see I am greatly indebted to T. D. Woodbury for getting me two very good jobs when I needed them.

Fry: You really preferred San Francisco to Hawaii?

Black: Yes, indeed. Still do.

Fry: What was this job in San Francisco?

Black: The job in San Francisco was with the California Forest Protective Association.

Fry: Who were the men whom you had to talk with in order to get this job?

Black: The president was Mr. William Wheeler, of Wheeler Timber Company; B. A. McAllister, the land commissioner for the Southern Pacific Railroad; Mr. C. R. Johnson, of the Union Lumber Company; and O. C. Haslitt--I think the name of his company was the Spanish Fork Lumber Company, just out of Quincy. Those four men.

Fry: And you were interviewed by them personally?

Black: I was taken by Mr. Wheeler to each of their offices. They talked to me, and apparently talked amongst themselves. I think some objected to my age.

Fry: You mean some of them felt you were too young?

Black: Some of them did. This was 1924. I was thirty. I can thank C. R. Johnson of the Union Lumber Company for passing over that deficiency. When Mr. Wheeler took me in to see him, his son Otis Johnson was there. And when Mr. Wheeler said, "There's been some question about Mr. Black being old enough to take on this responsibility," C. R. Johnson looked across at his son and said, "In this company we're not afraid of young men," because he had put his son in responsible positions. Of course his son later became president. I think that turned the trick as far as I was concerned. Of course on my next job they thought I was too old.

In 1943 when I went back to St. Paul to see the Weyerhaeuser people there, the criticism was that, "Well now, this man's pretty near fifty years old. That's too old to take a man on." So I guess thirty-five to forty is about the only age when you are qualified for a new job.

CALIFORNIA FOREST PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION
ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS

Fry: Looking back, how do you see the accomplishments of C.F.P.A. during the years you were its head?

Black: Here is my listing of the two most important accomplishments while I was in C.F.P.A.:

#1. Timber taxation:

Writing and getting adopted the State Constitutional Amendment 12 3/4 on forest taxation.

#2. Improving forest protection from fire:.

a. Greatly increased publicity on the urgent need for better control of forest and brush fires, through articles in newspapers and magazines, and through the statewide speeches illustrated with lantern slides by Winfield Scott.

b. Getting Association members to pay dues on lumber cut per year in addition to paying on amount of timberland owned. Without that increase the Association would have been ineffective if it survived at all.

c. Getting Col. Greeley to let the Association have some of the money the Clarke-McNary Act sent back to California, all of which was earned by C.F.P.A. membership expenditures for fire control on private timberlands. This was where C.F.P.A. got the funds with which it bought and gave to members the first tank fire trucks available in the industry and which also served small towns and brush areas outside of the forests owned by members.

d. The spark arrester study which greatly reduced the number of fires started by logging equipment including their oil burning locomotives. The night demonstrations convinced the loggers as well as the management.

e. Establishing the paid fire suppression crews, with the help of Rolland A. Vandegrift, which greatly reduced the number of incendiary fires.

Black: f. Labor Camps. Reduced fire hazards at lower elevation areas by cleanup work along roads, trails, etc.

I think I earned my salary.

Fry: I just wondered if there had been an evolution in the type of duties that were performed in your job with the C.F.P.A. from the time that you took it until the time that you left.

Black: No. I think I carried on as had my predecessor Swift Berry. I think I carried on as he had. He'd done an excellent job. He was later state senator. He was a member of the Board of Forestry for years, and prior to that he had been in the Forest Service.

Fry: In your job with California Forest Protective Association, did you work primarily with the Legislature?

Black: I think that a considerable portion of the job had to be with the Legislature, but that was only part of it; after all, it only met every two years, and was in session only a few months. For instance, we were interested in reducing the number of fires, and in seeing that taxation was not arbitrarily made. We were also interested in forest pests, such as blister rust and pine beetles, and did our best to see that something beneficial would be done in those lines--not only by the government, but also by individual companies. And that was it basically.

Fry: But it was primarily a program of fire protection and of taxation reform?

Black: Yes.

Fry: This was what everyone in C.F.P.A. was interested in?

Black: To a very high degree, those were the two most important factors. (Fire control was not as important in the redwoods as the other factor--taxation.) Part was to offset the publicity, which we considered unwarranted attacks on the private industry. That occurred not only in the state Legislature, but in some of the counties.

Fry: Your job included general publicity?

Black: No, I don't know how I would describe it. Sure, we sent out notices and news items and various things of that sort. They were almost entirely on the matter of fire, which was the big uncontrolled situation at the time. There was the fire activity

Black: in 1924 that was pretty important. We got more publicity on fire that season than we ever had before, partly because it was a very bad year.

Fry: You did get a lot of publicity, as evidenced by all of these newspaper clippings.*

Black: That's just a very small part of them. I don't think the Association kept the clippings. I know I didn't. If they were a year or two old we heaved them out; we didn't have the space to stack them. We have a wad that thick from just one circular.

Last week I started looking for a copy of the Review of Reviews, (January 1925) which ran the only article I ever wrote for which I received money. They paid me fifty bucks. (I bought a watch for my mother out of that) And I found a reprint of it.**

Here is an example of another story. This one appeared in the Stockton Record, the front page, and continued over here. That was quite an article.

Fry: What was it about?

Black: [Reading from clipping of April 23, 1927]

"California Leads All States in Reforestation and Timber Conservation. The Lumberman Has Become a Tree Farmer."
"Written for the Stockton Record by S. R. Black."

While I was looking I found a lot of stuff in envelopes that I do not recall ever seeing before, and I realize now where it came from. My mother died a few years ago and my sister-in-law closed up the house and sent me a lot of stuff. These were letters that I had written to my mother beginning in 1915 up on the Olympic Peninsula, as well as some of the bigger publicity blurbs that came out in the papers in California. I have them here, if you want to look through them. I don't know how much of this you're interested in.

* See appendix A.

** See appendix C.

Fry: Those things are usually pretty valuable for putting alongside the manuscript, helping to illustrate some of the things you talk about.

So the newspaper editors really co-operated then?

Black: Oh, they did. Like all these editor boys in the valley. The city [San Francisco] did pretty well, but those newspapers out in the valley, in the farm areas, they knew what we were talking about. Primarily they were interested in fire protection for the watersheds. It was the water they were interested in more than they were in the timber. And we pushed on that kind of heavy too, at times.

Fry: They wanted fire prevention in the timber area to protect their own water supply?

Black: Yes, they certainly did. They still do.

Fry: Did you get any organized support there from any farmer organizations or irrigation districts?

Black: We did somewhere. There was one of those blurbs that was signed by a whole bunch of associations, and some of those were farm, I think. But that was on the constitutional amendment. That has nothing to do with the fire deal.

We had, I would say, very cordial relationships with the secretary of the Wool Growers for a long time, W. P. Wing I think his name was, and of the Cattlemen's Association. Cattlemen and timber owners didn't always look alike at fires. Some of the cattlemen wanted fires, in order for it to burn over the brush for better grazing. But they were in the minority at that time.

Fry: So, you mean, burning was not an issue, especially?

Black: Some of them favored the burning, but we'd pretty well gotten over the worst of that issue. I think there was a time when both cattlemen and the wool growers preferred to burn the land and eliminate brush and young trees to get more grass and new growth. What they call 'light burning,' which rarely was light. They wanted grass, not trees. And I think some of them were perfectly satisfied with what Pratt was doing at the time. But conditions changed and they realized that they weren't as well off with the fires. Especially when the fires got into the pine timber, they didn't care. They said the Indians used to do it, and so forth.

Black: And there were light burning experiments carried on to get a record of their effect. I think Bevier Show, who was later district forester, at that time was in charge of one of them. The Forest Service was all against light burning. So was industry. And so was the State, as far as that is concerned. Many of our incendiary fires came from those who wanted the land. But over the years the cattlemen, most of them, changed their minds about this fire question.

Fry: Apparently you made some changes in the way the Association promoted recognition of the need for fire protection. Did you try to do more educating of the public with media other than the press?

Black: Yes. Much more. The only contact with the public we had had was those circulars in 1924, which we carried on from then on. But those were just circular letters; we did jillions of them and it wasn't sufficient. We decided to expand our contacts with the public, and for this purpose we hired a speech-maker, Winfield Scott. He had forestry slides, many of which we furnished. And he took pictures, and made slides showing what was being done in reforestation. It was brand new to most people; they had no idea that so much was being done. We carried the message of the danger of fire. All of those were pictures of fire--one side of the road and the other where one side had burned and the other hadn't, and so forth. He was an excellent speaker.

Fry: My notes say that he had three speeches, one for the pine region, one for the redwood region, and one for California in general. Apparently he blanketed the state. These were speeches before service organizations?

Black: Yes, and ladies' clubs.

Fry: Who were the major members of the California Forest Protective Association?

Black: I'm sorry I don't have a list of the board of directors or members. But every large timber company in the state was a member. I can give you quite a few of the names, but I certainly would overlook a lot of them.

* See appendix A.

Fry: The list of the board of directors is in the Forestry Library on the Berkeley campus. I think it's in C.F.P.A. annual reports.

Black: It would be, if you have the annual reports. I don't think you would find, ever, a list of all the members. In addition to those directors, fifteen or sixteen, we probably had fifty members. Some of them were small owners, like Congressman Kent, who gave Muir Woods as a park. He lived in Kentville, (named for his family). A thousand acres, I think was all he owned, but he joined the C.F.P.A. because he wanted to help forestry. The ownership of acreages of members ran all the way from one thousand to several hundred thousand acres, for some of the members. With over 800,000 acres Southern Pacific was the largest private owner of forest land in the state, and Red River Lumber Company was second. I couldn't tell you any more than those companies with any detail at all. We had many, many members who lived back East, and we had members like Weyerhaeuser Timber Company whose headquarters were up in Tacoma, so many of the members I never did meet personally.

Fry: Those who were so far away rarely got down to the meetings, I guess.

Black: That's right.

Fry: How were you financed? Was it by a straight membership fee from all?

Black: A membership fee was based on the acreage owned, with one or two exceptions where they just made a contribution that had no relation to the average. And that first report of mine shows how much we took in. There's a list of directors, and here's our financial statement for the year 1925.*

Fry: I see from assessments you got \$5,685. So that was about your base annual income?

Black: And with contributions of \$875 we had \$30 in interest, and we had cash from the previous year. Our total take in dues and contributions that year was \$6,560, of which I got \$3,600. Our secretary got \$90 per month and our rent was \$35, so it

*See appendix.

Black: left us with \$125 per month for miscellaneous expenses like travel and postage and circulars.

Fry: Your paper and printing cost must have been a problem.

Black: Ee! I know it was tight. I remember the same thing we had in 1925 when we put through the constitutional amendment on taxes. That's about all we had. The year following that constitutional amendment the total expenditures by the Association were approximately \$300.

I think about the last thing I did before leaving C.F.P.A.: we were really charging our members on an acreage basis, a sliding scale deal. We were running out of money, as usual, and I suggested we charge so much per thousand feet of lumber cut each year--a very small amount, but that would help out, and after all, the operators were causing more fires than the non-operators. That was approved. I have since heard from Mr. Schofield that that saved the Association because it brought in enough money to really do something. But you can ask him about that. I wasn't there long enough to get any of that money.

The Constitutional Amendment on Forest Taxation

Fry: Would you explain the provisions of the constitutional amendment on timber taxation that went before the voters in 1925?

Black: Let's start in the 1923 session of the Legislature. Mr. Swift Berry, (who preceded me as head of C.F.P.A.) I believe, suggested that Senator A. Burlingame Johnson of Pasadena introduce the bill providing for a change in the form of taxing young growing timber. It passed the Legislature and was vetoed as unconstitutional. So when I came in, in 1924, we tried to figure out something that would be constitutional and we could think of nothing--except an amendment to the constitution. I wrote it out in longhand; and Bill Rider took me over to see Demsey Lack, whom I had never met. He was then secretary of the Board of Equalization, and later went with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. He made a couple of suggestions on it and said it was O.K.; he thought it was all right.

Fry: I don't think we have stated exactly what this constitutional amendment embodied. Was it primarily aimed at tax exemption for cut over lands?

Black: It was Article XIII, Section 4. Originally the constitution said that "grape vines under the age of four years and fruit and nut trees under the age of eight years shall be exempt from taxation." So I added on to that, "And forest trees from lands on which timber had previously grown or had been planted would be exempt from taxation for...from which 70 per cent..." Oh, I ought to get a copy of that. It's here somewhere. It's in here. This is it.*

Fry: The principle was exemption.

Black: I just changed an amendment that was already in the constitution in favor of the farm group.

Fry: And you added--.

Black: I added us other farmers--we were tree farmers. A lot of farmers probably didn't even know that was in there and they were all for it.

So from there, we handed the bill to Senator A. B. Johnson and it was passed through the Legislature.

Fry: Johnson again was your major helper?

Black: Yes. He was interested in timber because his father, I believe, had owned timber up in Oregon at one time. Mr. Johnson himself

*"...all immature forest trees which have been planted on lands not previously bearing merchantable timber, or planted or of natural growth, upon lands from which the merchantable original growth timber stand to the extent of 70 per cent of all trees over sixteen inches in diameter had been removed, shall be exempt from taxation...provided, that forest trees or timber shall be considered mature for the purpose of this act at such time, after forty years from the time of planting, or removal of the original timber as above provided, as a board consisting of a representative from the state board of forestry... the state board of equalization and the county assessor...so determine."

Senate Constitutional Amendment No. 10, chapter 36, Stats. of 1925. Section 12 3/4, Article XIII of State Constitution. Adopted by Senate, March 13, on April 8 it passed Assembly where Frank Weller (L.A.) had brought it up. After passing 2/3rds of each house, it went to vote of people at next election.

Black: was not actively engaged, and as far as I know owned no timber, at that time. But he had a background of interest.

Fry: Did you have any support from other organizations for this?

Black: Yes, indeed we did. This [circular*] is from the Reforestation Constitutional Amendment Committee, which I recommended to those people listed, and a few others who didn't accept membership on it.

Fry: Francis Cuttle was chairman. Who was he?

Black: He was from Riverside, and was a very active sponsor of all fire control in Southern California because of the watersheds. I believe he was vitally interested in the water system for Riverside. He was really nice. He was a leader and officer in the Southern California conservation groups of one kind or another, on fire.

Fry: You worked with Charles Dunwoody too, at this time, it seems.

Black: At that time Dunwoody was for us. After all, this was 1925. He'd been there in the conservation committee of the State Chamber of Commerce for a very short time. I'd just arrived in my job too. We had not locked horns on any issue at that time.

Fry: It was still sweetness and light between you, then.

Black: All sweetness and light then.

Fry: Was he able to really help out in the lobbying activities?

Black: I can't remember that he lobbied for it. I don't think he did. I don't think we needed any help with lobbying at that time. It seemed quite simple. You see, they'd passed a bill of the same kind on the same subject, the previous session; and it was held unconstitutional. So when this one came up we had no opposition from the State people, like the Board of Equalization. They wanted the cut over lands to remain in private ownership.

Fry: Yes. Apparently the cut over land was being bought up by the federal government because the private owners couldn't pay the taxes on the young timber during the years it was growing.

* See appendix A.

Fry: I guess the Board of Equalization wanted as much land as possible to remain in private hands, and thereby on the tax rolls.

Black: Certainly.

Fry: I noticed that Mr. S. Bevier Show, who was the U.S. Forest Service Regional Forester, was behind it.

Black: He was for it. He was basically interested in good forestry. And that outweighed his desire to get more land for the U.S. Forest Service. He was really a dedicated forester, as far as that's concerned.

Fry: You also had George Pardee's backing, according to the list of members on the Reforestation Committee.

Black: Ex-governor Pardee. And I think he was chairman of the Board of Forestry at that particular time.

Fry: It calls him a "conservationist" on your letterhead.

Black: Well, he was chairman of the Board of Forestry.

Fry: I don't see any sponsors listed from the Board of Forestry.

Black: Well, then there wasn't anybody.

Fry: Why?

Black: Well...now...who would there be? Let me see. I liked the Chairman of the Legislative Committee of the County Assessors Association better than the Board of Forestry. That was a name that carried weight. Herb Gilman, who was on the Board of Forestry, but I think it was later; M. B. Pratt, the state forester, was on it; S. B. Show.

Fry: You had no opposition, then, from the Board of Forestry?

Black: No, all of the forestry people were united in support of that, insofar as I know.

Fry: Where did your opposition come from? You didn't get this through unanimously, did you?

Black: No, but the opposition was scattered. In passing the bill and getting votes for it, opposition came from people who were against any changes of that nature, just in general, and from people who didn't understand it and therefore voted "No." But with regard to publicity and the education--we had the

Black: support of practically every newspaper of consequence in the state, which made a tremendous difference. That was something they could see that was reasonable.

Fry: As one of your big tasks after you'd only been in the job for a year or so, how did you go about contacting the editors? Did you make any personal contacts, or just send material out?

Black: I wrote them.

Fry: You wrote them personally?

Black: Yes. And where I could I got somebody who knew them to talk to them. But I didn't know many of them at the time. I didn't know very many people in California at the time. Up in the timber belt there was no trouble, I had people there to help out; but that would be small towns, it wasn't like San Francisco. Another thing, the Stockton Record has always been in favor of conservation; the Sacramento Bee has always been in favor of conservation. They disagreed with me many times on ways and means, but nevertheless they were in favor of it generally, and they couldn't see anything wrong with this. So we had the usual "No" votes of ignorance. We didn't face anything that we faced later, as we did in trying to change the Board of Forestry. No really organized opposition that I can remember to the amendment.

Fry: What did this do to the practice, which up to that time was very widespread, I understand, of trading cut over land to the Forest Service for stumpage?

Black: Oh, it slowed it down.

Fry: So that most of the forest land owners with whom you were in contact began to hold onto their lands more; is that what you are saying?

Black: Many more of them, yes. Many more. Thousands of acres were involved in that, many thousands. This amendment prevented artificially high assessments on land, so that the owners could afford to carry it. Coupled with it, they could afford to keep it from burning up.

Fire Prevention and Control

Black: Simultaneously, starting in 1925, as you can see by a lot of these papers, we worked as hard as we could on the fire control problem. It was no good unless we could control fire.

Fry: That was your big job. You had already been involved in this the year before, after that bad fire year, hadn't you?

Black: That's right, yes. We kept it right up from there on, and then when I was also forest engineer for the California White and Sugar Pine Association, (I cannot remember whether it was under their sponsorship or that of the Forest Protective Association) we started our spark arrester study. And that worked out very well. That was the first (if I may be pardoned for the term) scientific--the first practical, at least--investigation of the efficiency of spark arresters on wood and oil-burning logging equipment, both donkey engines and railroad, that had ever been done. I saw my friend Dick Colgan last week in San Francisco, and I mentioned our meeting, and my hope that somebody would call on him. And I told him the four things that I thought I had done while in the Forest Protective Association that were of consequence. He said, "You didn't even mention spark arresters. That was one of the best things that you ever did." That was his attitude as a forester with a company in the woods.

Spark Arresters

Fry: What were the results of your spark arrester study?

Black: We made great improvements in the design and better machining of the manufactured parts. Colgan mentioned one spark arrester that was built in Oroville. We tested the Jones Spark Arrester made in Oroville but it was first tested at the Clover Valley Lumber Company in Loyalton. We tested the Bruce Arrester first at McCloud and later at other logging camps. The first oil burning engine was tested at Fruit Growers Supply Camp, at Hilt, just south of the Oregon line. Several other shows were put on at other camps.

Black: There were others that we proved were entirely inefficient, and they were eliminated in favor of the better ones. We carried it on to oil burning locomotives and showed that they could set fires--most of the companies felt that they could not. This is the thing we did that really proved to the loggers themselves what we were talking about. We would go to an operation, and when they were quitting for the evening to go in for dinner they would leave a log hooked on to their cable, out in the woods, and come in. And after dinner when it was dark we would go back out to the donkey engine and fire it up and reel in the log. Most of those donkey engines looked like Mt. Vesuvius or the Fourth of July Roman candles. Sparks that came out of there, the height they went and the number that hit the ground alive, startled every logging superintendent who let me put on that experiment. And immediately they got busy.

There is a lot of pitch in pine, which they burned for fuel. The pitch would accumulate on a screen up above through which the exhaust blew out--you see, you put a steam pipe inside the stack to create a forced draft. And some of them--the Bruce Spark Arrester, which was one of the best--had a slide in the screen which you could open. So when you fired it up in the morning and had no forced draft in there, you could get a better draft with it open than if it were closed. That arrester had cables down from the screen slide and hooks where you pulled it down with one cable and locked it open, or you pulled it with the other cable and it was closed. Many of them, to get more steam and do it easier, would leave the slide open when they were logging--carelessly or deliberately. And the exhibition at night of what happened, seeing these sparks come out, scared them; because the donkey engineer was always out there when this thing was run, and half the logging camp would go out there after dinner on a train of flatcars to see this. They had nothing else to do.

Fry: So it was a real show.

Black: Yes, it was a real show and very effective. At that time it was thought that oil burning engines like most logging locomotives did not throw out sparks. The manager at Fruit Growers Supply Company at Hilt, California, was persuaded to make a test on the oil burner that hauled logs from the camp to town--a distance of about six miles, most of which was downhill, but the last mile or so was uphill. I persuaded them to keep the logging train in camp until after dark and then run into town. The train crew, the manager and I stayed in camp for dinner and after dark we started out for town. There were no sparks while going down hill, but when we went uphill a lot of sparks

Black: came out and quite a few were still alive when they hit the ground. That explained how one fire had started that burned into the edge of town. So they and other companies put on arresters and used sand to blow out and clean up.

Dick Colgan told me something I didn't know. He said, "Our boys went further than that and figured out what the difference was going downhill and uphill and what you could do then and you couldn't do then, and so forth. We really tested it out and got some real answers, which were passed around." I had forgotten all about that, if I ever knew it.

I was asked to make a speech at the W.F.C.A., telling about our spark arrester activities.

Fry: This was Western Forest and Conservation Association?

Black: That's right. All British Columbia, Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California. E. T. Allen was the manager of it, and he had me give a speech before the meeting in which I told them what we had done. Anybody who didn't believe it just could follow that practice of running the machines after dark and they could prove to themselves what we were talking about. So Colgan thinks that as far as forest fire prevention in the logging camps and the logging railroads, that that's the biggest single thing that was done. I think you will find that when I was the sugar pine forest engineer, they wanted me to do some other things, the same as was done with spark arresters. I think Colgan can tell you more about that spark arrester deal than I can remember. It didn't seem so important to me.

I hope you can talk to Colgan. He comes down here frequently for meetings; you wouldn't have to go to Chico. He can just stay over a day and talk to you next time he comes. I say he is number one in private forestry. It's his experience here, with Diamond Match, later with National Lumber Manufacturing Association in Washington, and then he came back and worked for Shafco, a Walker family holding of a good many thousand acres.

I am of the opinion that he was the first man to harvest enough Christmas trees on the basis of improving his forest and thinning it out, and sold them for enough to pay all his taxes that year on the cut over lands. He was number one. Most of them, if they had Christmas trees to cut, just let a guy go out and cut what he wanted. But Colgan had his all marked, and the fellow who cut them had to take the ones that were marked and no others. That shows you the difference between Colgan and some of the others.

California Forest Protective Association's Use
of Clarke-McNary Funds

The First Water Tank Trucks

Fry: What about the Clarke-McNary operations in the state? I got the idea from some of the annual reports that C.F.P.A. was quite active in the use of Clarke-McNary funds.

Black: Yes.

Fry: And that there was a sharp difference of opinion on how they were to be used, between C.F.P.A. and the state forester?

Black: Well, I guess differences of opinion were sprouting up on many items at that time.

We used the money, as I mentioned before, to buy--five, I guess it was--fire trucks with water. A pump was hooked onto the engine at first. Then we got some portable pumps. You'd pump out of the truck tank here at the road, to the portable empty canvas tank, put your hose in and go on up the hill further than the tank pump could pump, to another place.

Fry: This was the change-over from fighting fires with dirt and sand, to water?

Black: Yes. That's right. And I think that was one of the exceptionally, really important things. To my mind that was as important as the spark arrester deal, because its impact was wider, on all fires. And the State Division of Forestry now has the finest fire control organization in the United States, in my opinion. And I think our C.F.P.A.-Clarke-McNary funds put the real push behind the fire trucks in the woods.

Fry: Was that in the early thirties, or in the twenties?

Black: It must have been in the late twenties. I can't tell you, I don't know; I don't see any clippings on that. I can't answer it accurately. I just know we did it, and it was before there was any fight between Pratt and myself. Rider, I remember, was all for these trucks. Mr. Pratt just didn't have much to say about it. Some of those trucks had State Division of Forestry state

Black: licenses and some were company licenses, depending on who, in the long run, was to own the truck.

It was Colonel W. B. Greeley, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, over the opposition, I think, of the local people, including Mr. Pratt, who felt that the Forest Protective Association should have a Clarke-McNary refund on expenditure of its members for fighting fire, because the refunds all came to the state, and the State Division of Forestry was protecting practically no timber in the state; they were only protecting brushlands below the area of the U.S. Forest Service jurisdiction. The Forest Service was protecting most of the private timberland, and we were paying for that, so much per acre. It seemed reasonable we should have some credit for the money we were putting into the state. We weren't getting anything back. Mr. Greeley agreed with me, and for several years we got it.

Lowlands Versus Forests

Fry: I wanted to ask you why these State Division of Forestry fire protection measures were applied mostly to lands that were primarily nonforest, to the grass-and brushlands.

Black: Because those were the only ones that were under state jurisdiction. The timberlands lay inside the outer boundaries of the national forests at higher altitudes, surrounded by the national forest land and intermingled with their forest land.

I think I remember in 1916 that the state, or later than that, that they had \$45,800 for the 1916-17 biennium for all their needs. Their staff consisted of the State Forester, deputy forester, two girls, and about three men out in the brush somewhere. It couldn't amount to anything. Later Pratt funds, other than the state appropriations, were augmented by the return from Clarke-McNary. And naturally that allowed him to put on more help. I'm sorry I can't help you much on the detail of this: that's too long ago.

Fry: You might just tell me in story form the sequence of events as you remember it.

Black: Southern California was a big help in asking for better protection

Black: from the watershed angle, whether it was private land or U.S. forest land or any other land. For years they had a county forester, named Spence Turner, who was very capable. One of the men on the Board of Forestry for a good many years was Mr. Gilman, from the San Dimas area, not far from Riverside. He was an exceedingly capable man. The importance of brush cover for watershed protection finally, I think, sort of influenced the cattle and the sheep men that the burning of the foothills led to erosion and was serious so far as water was concerned. Water became more and more important. At one time the livestock men (I can't remember just who they were now) around Fresno wanted to stop all logging because we were ruining the watershed.

At that time it was well known that the perfect watershed is grass, in California, because it dies down in the summertime and there's no transpiration of moisture; whereas with trees, their large root system continues to take water out of the soil and put it into the air. It was our contention that young growing trees, resulting from cutting the larger ones, probably did a better job of controlling erosion, they were thicker, and took less water, probably, than the larger ones. That didn't go over very rapidly or very well. But I think the changes that the industry made in its logging methods, improving them, with the selective logging...

Fry: The advent of the tractor?

Black: The advent of the tractor, primarily, changed that attitude. But some of the companies were doing a remarkably fine job before the tractor. I would like to have you see what some of that Diamond Match land was with Dick Colgan's operations on that, with high lead logging, and what they call selective logging. You go up here, down, and out; and the discovery of "siwash trees." In other words, you leave some big trees standing and your line will rub against that tree and the log will bounce around it instead of knocking your trees down.

Later you might cut that tree and use it, but you didn't whack it all down at one time. He and his logging superintendent developed that exceedingly well. Others paid no attention to it. And the appearance of the Diamond Match timberlands still shows the results of his activity, beautifully.

Fry: This business of protecting the watershed was a concern, apparently, of C.F.P.A.

Black: Oh, yes.

Fry: It was being protected at the expense of the forests; is this right? Under Pratt's policy, there was far more money going into protecting the grasslands and the brushlands.

Black: Grass and brush, and none of the Clarke-McNary money got back into the protection of the areas which were paying the money in on which the Clarke-McNary refund was made. And that's when Colonel Bill Greeley, the chief forester, told me, "O.K., we'll get you some of it, you're entitled to some of it." That was the first real money our association ever had.

Fry: A sort of C.F.P.A. fund, which you dispensed then for fire protection in the timberlands?

Black: Yes, which the California Forest Protective Association dispensed. As I say, we used that to buy those first fire trucks, and other things of that sort.

Fry: Was this made available only to members of C.F.P.A.?

Black: We put trucks in certain areas for use on anybody's land; and if they were close enough, that included brush fires and the edge of the forest, wherever they were. For instance, one was at Weed, which is not in the timber area itself, but all around it is timber. I'd say the same thing is true in Sonora, where the Pickering Lumber Company was headquartered, or just out of Sonora. And that took in all that area. The one at Camino was available anywhere. The same thing was true of the one at Sterling City, which was in the North Butte Forest Protective Association. Colgan got a co-operative deal there. The fifth truck was at McCloud at the McCloud River Lumber Company.

Fry: The ones you're talking about were paid for by C.F.P.A.; the checks would have been written by C.F.P.A.?

Black: That's right.

Fry: On Clarke-McNary refund money.

Black: That's right.

Fry: And this was used as an independent supplement to what the state was supposed to have been doing?

Black: Yes. Then when I had the row with Pratt, the Forest Service cancelled out the Clarke-McNary funds. So we had no more money and that ended the deal: dropped. But by that time, the state

Black: was doing a better job, with more funds; we had the fire truck deal going, and the lumber companies themselves were doing more. That went along with the development of that spark arrester study and a few other things that gradually licked some of the worst troubles. And by that time, we had the paid fire suppression crews, thanks to Vandegrift. That stopped a lot of incendiary fires. You had a crew that you could always call on, and that meant quicker approach on trucks, with water.

So it sort of grew, like Topsy, and got better and better, and I think we have the best State Division of Forestry now in the United States. I think they do the best job of fire control that exists in the United States. And I think, basically, it's due to the fact that they got rid of Pratt and put in a first class man, "Swede" [DeWitt] Nelson. And he did something. He did such a good job that he was made Director of Natural Resources, which--previously--had been just a political appointment.

Repeal of the Compulsory Fire Patrol Act

Fry: This was, I guess, then, when C.F.P.A. backed the move, or maybe initiated the move to repeal the compulsory fire patrol act, in 1940. Under the compulsory fire patrol act, did the private owners have to kick in a certain amount of money per acre each year for fire patrolling?

Black: Yes.

Fry: Was this associated with Clarke-McNary?

Black: No. But the money that the private timber owners had to put up to protect their lands was the basis of Clarke-McNary reimbursement money that came back to the state: the greater the amount spent in the state, the greater the amount the state got back from the Clarke-McNary Act.

Then I got in a row with--I don't know, I seemed to get into quite a few rows after that--but the big one was with State Forester Pratt. The U.S. Forest Service sent Jay Price, the California Clarke-McNary inspector, to see me; he was one of the men in the Forest Service office in San Francisco that I knew pretty well and liked very much. He took me out to lunch at

- Black: the Nugget and told me it was all over, no more Clarke-McNary money.* (But by that time, we had fire protection.) He cancelled out on what Greely had arranged. (He didn't have the authority to do it himself, but he was the one who was given the job of telling me.) Later he became Regional Forester, back in Madison, Wisconsin. A very fine man.
- Fry: And you did manage to get the compulsory fire patrol act repealed?
- Black: Yes.
- Fry: The State Division of Forestry, at the same time, was asking--.
- Black: I'll tell you another reason why we wanted that repealed. It cost the state almost as much to collect that money, with all the maps and descriptions and time that was spent and clerks that worked on it, as they were taking in. And it was inaccurate as the devil.
- Fry: Oh, it was?
- Black: Many of the companies would be charged with acreage they didn't own. Others wouldn't be caught at all. But it took a lot of clerical work; it would be like collecting a half-a-cent sales tax.
- Fry: How did this repeal affect the small owner?
- Black: Didn't hurt them a bit.
- Fry: Did they still have adequate patrols for fire?
- Black: They had the same thing that they had before, the state hadn't done a cussed thing anyway. If you contracted with the federal government, the Forest Service, you got your protection. So actually the state program had outrun its usefulness. It was started way, way back when a lot of people wouldn't pay anything. The forest wasn't worth saving, so the heck with it. But times had changed.
- Fry: Did you have the support of the Forest Service on this, do you remember?
- Black: I can't remember. But I think some of the records would show somewhere. I don't know.
- Fry: What did you want to substitute for the repealed legislation?

* See Ray Clar notes Appendix E. Paragraph A.

Black: Voluntary control. By that time the timberland owners were all paying the Forest Service or were putting on their own protection. Diamond Match, for instance, had its own protective organization. And it formed the North Butte Forest Protective Association, which was a joint deal among the state, the federal government, and the Forest Service. It was stationed at Sterling City, and I gave them one of those trucks. A forest ranger, Reuben Box, was put in charge of it. And immediately they had a better fire record than they'd ever had before. Part of the fire control was state and part of it was federal and part, the immediate logging area, was Diamond Match. They did a fine job.

Fry: And you felt that this co-operative arrangement worked better?

Black: Very much better. You can ask Mr. Colgan about that. He would have the details because he was there.

Fry: What about the role of the state in the new proposed arrangement? Was there to be an increase in state funds? Do you remember?

Black: I don't know that I cared, because none of the money that we paid ever was used on the lands that the state covered.

Fry: From that time on, did the private owners more or less do their own patrolling?

Black: No. They continued to pay the Forest Service. You see they had contracts with the Forest Service long, long before that, for many years, because the Forest Service had a good fire protection organization. The state didn't.

Proposed Tax Increase in 1940

Fry: In 1940 there was an additional million dollars that was brought up as a proposed appropriation for the State Division of Forestry, which would have increased the costs from 8.8 cents to 15 cents an acre; and C.F.P.A. was opposing this. Do you remember that?

Black: Isn't that the time that I proposed my...I surely would have opposed it, but I don't remember it at all. What year was that?

Fry: This was 1940. I think the idea of C.F.P.A. was for the state to assume responsibility for protection of private forest lands, too. And this tax income would have been expended largely to grass and the lowlands.

Black: The state didn't have any organization. I guess probably one of the reasons I was opposed to it was that Pratt was still State Forester, and I knew very well he wouldn't get ten cents on the dollar back in any good. He always had money enough for a new car, when his old one would be given to the next man down, and so pretty soon they were all equipped with Buicks instead of Fords or Chevrolets. That kind of administration. I don't remember that, but I'm sure we would have opposed it. Make a note to ask Dick Colgan on that. He was here right through that period. And, by the way, his memory is far better than mine.

Fry: He's one of these who retains everything, then?

Black: He seems to. He's been tied right into it.

White Pine Blister Rust Control

Fry: One of the things that you attacked in C.F.P.A. in addition to fires was blister rust, I understand.

Black: That is right. White pine blister rust.

Fry: Did you try to work with the federal government on this?

Black: Very much so. That was strictly their job. And the Forest Service was all for it because they had a lot of the white pine on their lands. You see the California white pine is really a yellow pine and is not susceptible to blister rust, while the sugar pine is a true white pine and is susceptible. So the sugar pine was affected. That meant the area that covers about the southern half of the Sierras, maybe from Nevada City on down as far as the timber belt goes, east of Bakersfield somewhere. In that area was the group interested in blister rust control. And they were all C.F.P.A. members. So we worked as hard as we could to get bigger appropriations to do something. And they did. And it's continuing now.

Fry: How did you go about getting those appropriations? Wouldn't these have been congressional appropriations?

Black: This was Congress, yes.

Fry: Did you have a particular congressman who was very good on this?

Black: I would think we had two, if I could remember their names.

Fry: Congressman Lea?

Black: No, because he was from the redwood district; he didn't have any work on that bill.

Fry: But I think he did sponsor the bill, according to my notes.

Black: I think he did, but as a conservationist rather than a redwood man. I cannot remember the name. I'm sorry.

Fry: Was there any attempt to get state funds?

Black: No. The state didn't have any white pine land. The State Division of Forestry lands didn't include altitudes high enough for sugar pine, and they weren't interested. The Forest Service was vitally interested. That was one of those jobs I worked with the Forest Service on. We preferred telegrams to letters to our congressmen and got as many sent as we could, not only from the pine people but from all of their suppliers down in the city, the fellows that made the donkey engines or the wire cable and the caterpillar tractors. So we spread out the interest of this thing; if pine was gone, why, their business was gone. And that was done by just going around and seeing them and persuading them.

Fry: What did the State Board of Forestry think about this?

Black: It was fine. They were all in favor of it.

White pine blister rust control is working on the eradication. When I was up on Labor Day, 1967, in the woods I saw the strings and the little markers on the trees where they were taking sample cuts to see if there is any rust; checking.

There is one other thing. The senator--Van Beman--who succeeded A. Burlingame Johnson from Pasadena, was a wonderfully fine man. And I got a bill passed through the Legislature prohibiting bringing in black currants, which was the alternate host for white pine blister rust. And the agricultural stations at

Black: our borders were required to enforce that. They don't any more.

Fry: Bringing in what?

Black: Black currants. Ribes nigrum. Don't ask me to spell it.

Fry: We will have to look it up in the dictionary anyway. [Laughter]

Black: This Van Beman had a sense of humor which was a dandy. He didn't have any white pine in Pasadena, but I got him to introduce the bill, as I had apparently been well-recommended to him by A. Burlingame Johnson. (The old man hadn't run for re-election; he'd supported this much younger man.) So I asked if he'd do it. And he said, "Sure. What is it?" [Laughter] Then he had a little trouble pronouncing this. I remember when it passed the Senate he made some wisecrack about it that got them to laughing, and boom, it went right through without a single revision. They didn't know what it was.

Fry: They didn't know what they were prohibiting? [Laughter]

Black: They didn't know or care much, as long as he was for it; he was well-liked. I remember that one particularly. That kind of thing I can remember. But all those different appropriations and other stuff are hard to sort out.

Fry: Well, let's concentrate on these anecdotes that you remember, because they're informative too.

I'm curious about how C.F.P.A. worked with some of the other conservation organizations and lobbies. I'm thinking especially of Mr. Dunwoody's burgeoning--.

Black: California Development Association. Then it became a part of the State Chamber of Commerce. In the later years that I was here, Dunwoody tried to take over the California Forest Protective Association. Several members of the California Forest Protective Association were talked into the belief that they shouldn't pay dues to two organizations--that they could accomplish what they were doing just as well by letting Dunwoody do it all.

Fry: So, did the two organizations become quite competitive?

Black: I don't think we were competitive except as to who was to do the work being done by the C.F.P.A. It was to be done by Dunwoody or Black, and I was not in favor of being abolished. Couldn't vote for that.

Had Dunwoody and the California Development Association

Black: been successful in taking over the activities of the C.F.P.A. it would have meant the end of that organization. I doubt very, very much that the California Development Association could ever have accomplished the many things in fire control, etc. that the C.F.P.A. has done and probably will continue to do.

Fry: Which organization grew to be stronger?

Black: The California Development Association, which became the state Chamber of Commerce, is just what its name is. It represents most all the big business in California. And if you remember, Dunwoody was sent back there to Washington to lobby on one of Ickes's bills.

Fry: On reorganization.

Black: I don't remember the issue.

Fry: What would you call it?

Black: Well, I thought he was anti-Ickes. Whatever Ickes wanted at that time the State Chamber was against. And you know why Dunwoody was sent home, back to San Francisco.

Fry: Why?

Black: The story I heard was because Mr. Ickes said that if Dunwoody didn't leave Washington that the Camp Curry concession in Yosemite would no longer be renewed by the National Parks and one of the Curry's investors was Harry Chandler, owner of the Los Angeles Times, who happened to be a director of the state Chamber of Commerce. It was simple. That was after my time.

Fry: Did Dunwoody step down from the Chamber position at that time?

Black: No.

Fry: He continued?

Black: For a short time he did. But a man in Sonoma County, Santa Rosa I think it was, met him on the train, liked him--and Dunwoody was a very persuasive talker, he could be a very charming personality when he wanted to be, and most the time was. As I understand it, that man had no heirs and turned over his organization, or business, to Mr. Dunwoody.

Fry: Oh, I see.

Black: And that's when Mr. Dunwoody left the Association. Did much better for himself, much better. But I haven't seen or heard of him since before he went to Washington. I was not involved in that. I was then somewhere else.

Fry: Do you have any good stories you remember perhaps of testifying before legislative committees or something else involved in your activities with C.F.P.A.?

Black: Well, as a lobbyist I remember one that I enjoyed very much. There was a bill which passed the Assembly prohibiting the use of any wood in school buildings. And it went over to the Senate. I had more friends in the Senate than I had in the Assembly because the Assembly was then mostly city dominated.

Fry: This was toward fireproofing schools?

Black: Yes. Fireproofing schools. Senator Chris Jespersen of San Luis Obispo was chairman of that committee. After the other boys had made their speeches he said, "We use wood in our schools. We like it better than we do concrete or gypsum board. And I'm not in favor of any such bill." They put it to a vote and didn't get a single vote in the Senate for the bill. When that thing's shut off I can tell you more.

But Chris Jespersen has a big school named for him. It's the Jespersen High School; I think it is down there in San Luis Obispo. He was a fine man. He was a farmer. Brilliant. Well-liked. He probably knew a little bit about how to build schools, I think. He was smart. I don't think he missed much.

Fry: I don't understand where the financial backing would have come from for the support of the bill.

Black: It came primarily from the gypsum board, wall board people. It is fireproof material. Now it's required in many cities instead of plywood and wood lath. And many of the cities have changed their code to require it. In many of them you couldn't have lath, paneling. It's been tried in the city council of Palo Alto. I don't know whether it passed or not. But I see a great many houses built of plywood both outside and in now. Some of it's fireproofed, some isn't. And it's very pretty. Of course, I was in the plywood business at the end of my activities; I'm prejudiced.

So what's next?

Fry: How about the development of permanent fire suppression crews?

Paid Fire Suppression Crews

Black: The next big job was the organizing for paid permanent fire suppression crews. I think it was while Vandegrift was still Director of Finance. You see, we had so many incendiary fires. Didn't I tell you this before?

Fry: No.

Black: Tremendous numbers. You see, there were few jobs in the bottom of the Depression, '31, '32, so forth. As a result, people out in the country set fires in order to get fifty cents an hour for putting them out. The longer the fire burned the more money they made, and it was serious. So I told Vandegrift what we should do was to quit paying by the hour entirely. We should hire groups of men and have them paid by the month. They weren't paid very much, but they were paid by the month and they put out the fires. That was the program that stopped the incendiary fires almost overnight. That was the start of the paid fire suppression crew, which we still have in California now.

It must have been a sequel to our labor camps because they had worked out so well, Vandegrift convinced the governor on both labor camps and paid fire suppression crews. The state didn't pay much for those fire suppression crews; we didn't have very much money. But it was all blasted through the papers: "No more pay for putting out fires." It was all going to be done by regular crews.

Fry: No more incendiaries?

Black: I wouldn't say no more; very little. Oh, it was a tremendous change. I have no records on it, but I know it went way down. And they were maintained from that time on.

Article Ten

Fry: The last time we stopped without going into your activities with Article Ten.

Black: Yes. And that's the one I can't remember much about.

Fry: This was the lumber code that came out of the National Recovery Act, which was declared unconstitutional, after a very short life span, by the Supreme Court. In the meantime, I believe the industrial and governmental forestry committees had been set up, with representatives of timber owners and so forth on them. And they had developed a cutting code.

Black: Yes.

Fry: I thought perhaps that C.F.P.A. would have had a lot to do with this, as well as you personally. I think Emanuel Fritz was one of the Article Ten foresters for a while in the redwoods.

Black: Yes. Well, I know I read something in some of the C.F.P.A. minutes that you have in which I was assigned to the Article Ten work. Now, whether that was by the Pine Association or the C.F.P.A., darned if I can remember.

Three Per Cent Loan Proposal

Black: Did I give you a long-winded statement about the tax?

Fry: I don't believe so.

Black: I looked through the stuff that I had kept, and I couldn't find it; it was about a three-or-four page speech. I proposed that the federal government make long-term (that is, twenty-year terms, as I remember) loans to the industry at a rate of 3 per cent interest on newly cut over lands, which would enable the company to redeem those lands instead of selling them or abandoning them. That would enable them to pay the county taxes and keep the counties going during the Depression. The local lumber industry approved. That's the only thing that I can remember about Article Ten.

Directors of Natural Resources

Fry: Will you make some comments about directors of natural resources?

Black: Nordenholdt, who was an oil man, did very little that I could ever figure as far as forestry was concerned.

Fry: Do you mean his own occupation was that of an oil man?

Black: Yes, he worked in that industry. Then we had Stevenot, and we had Dan Blood. Dan Blood was an accountant.

Fry: How was he as an administrator?

Black: He did a pretty good job, considering that his was a financial-clerical background. And Stevenot came in. He later--oh, I guess he still is Bank of America, isn't he?

Fry: Stevenot, I think, was a young appointee. Is that right?

Black: Yes.

Fry: Do you mean he later went with Bank of America?

Black: Yes. They made him--I think they made him president of a pulp and paper company up at Bellingham, Washington, as I remember. And later (he, at that time, was a Bank of America man) he became president of the Bank of America. He was a big improvement over what we had had. But at the same time, there was no soap on additional funds for the Division of Forestry. The governor would veto the appropriations that were passed up for increases.

Fry: Did you find more of an interest in forestry on the part of the director? (That would be Dan H. Blood under Rolph.)

Black: Yes, I did. I had known Blood before he was made director. He was much more co-operative.

Fry: Were all these men chosen more or less on how well they supported the campaign?

Black: I can't answer that, truthfully. I would say that, aside from

Black: Blood, that was the general way of going at it, the big exception being Swede Nelson. Very definitely the exception.

Fry: Nordenholdt must have come in with Merriam.

Black: I guess so.

Fry: Was he a man who had the power to make decisions under Merriam, do you think? Did he make them?

Black: I don't know whether he ever made one or not. He decided against anything I was for. And whether that was his belief or Merriam's, I can't tell you.

Fry: Did you feel that Blood, more or less, was an independent?

Black: Much more co-operative, with me at least.

Fry: That kind of gives us a picture here to go on.

Black: We tried to pass a \$361,000 appropriation in 1927.* The Director of Finance at that time was Alexander Heron, and the Director of Natural Resources was Fred Stevenot. We passed our big appropriation for the Division of Forestry through the Legislature, and Governor Young vetoed it.

And then I remember a little later sitting in the front row of the Hotel Bellevue in San Francisco. We had a meeting of the forestry group and Fred Stevenot came down there to tell us what a wonderful governor we had and how interested he was in conservation. And I couldn't help but laugh in his face. He was the one who got the governor to veto the appropriation.

Then Alexander Heron went with Crown Zellerbach, who's got as much interest in fire control as anybody I know. But that wasn't his job at the time. That requested 1927 appropriation did sound like a lot of money. But compared to \$22,000,000 a year now, it doesn't sound like very much, does it?

Fry: No, it doesn't, really, but it was a lot then.

Black: It stirred things up. I think, even though it was vetoed, we probably got better consideration next time.

* See Appendix E , Ray Clar's Notes, Paragraph C.

STATE LABOR CAMPS

Fry: Next I have down here the story of the California State Labor Camps. We'll include this report which you wrote for the Legislature.*

Black: You wrote my name in that one. Suppose you take the one without any name in it.

Fry: Thank you.

Black: When I was looking I found all this other stuff.

Fry: Since this seemed to come up right at the beginning of Governor Rolph's term, I wonder if this idea had been at all mentioned in the campaign.

Black: No. It had not. I didn't think of it until after Rolland A. Vandegrift was Director of Finance. He's the one who went along with me and was very much responsible for having the camps because the governor trusted him thoroughly, and \$100,000 from the emergency fund was put up for them. If you read that report you'd see. It's a pretty good job. It was from that and the success of that that I got pulled into the paid fire suppression crew project, which was on a bigger scale.

Mr. Wollenberg, who was in charge of Laguna Honda Home, in San Francisco, was a tremendous help to me. He was a very close friend of Governor Rolph, had been his friend when he was Mayor Rolph. He steered me right on making the money go as far as it could possibly go, in low prices for shoes and socks and shirts and overalls. We got them for pennies apiece in San Francisco. He was responsible for that, not I. Also for getting contributions from many organizations in the way of other help for these people. I mentioned before, I'll say it again: they weren't all bums. Most of the bums got off the trains before they got to California after learning that they would have to work in California.

Fry: After the camps started, you mean?

Black: After they started. The first publicity blast we sent out, we

*

California State Labor Camps Report, July 1932. Sacramento, California.

Black: made the camps look just as bad as though they were on a rock pile in San Quentin.

Fry: Oh, you made it look more like a concentration camp?

Black: Oh, we made it look as tough as we possibly could in our radio broadcasts and in articles furnished to newspapers.

Fry: This brings up the question about how voluntary membership was in the camps.

Black: If you wanted to eat and work, you could go to camp. If you didn't work, you were kicked out of camp. They didn't have to go to camp. We offered camps. And that partly explains why we got a higher class of person. We had no trouble in camps-- fights, ruckusses, drunkenness, nothing that I know of. It may have happened in isolated cases that I didn't hear of. But I knew of none. We had a good number of people with college educations. We had a Romanoff who was supposed to be one of the lost heirs of the czar of Russia; but as soon as the papers in Eureka printed that, he was out of camp and gone.

Fry: Because he felt he didn't need it?

Black: No, because he didn't want to be identified. Nobody knew where this boy was, and maybe doesn't yet, so it was unfortunate. But, as I said, we had all the cooks, we had all the plumbers, we had all the carpenters, we had every kind of trade that one could need. We had barbers; they didn't get paid for cutting hair, they just cut hair: that's what their work was. All kinds of help.

And good food. It was just comparable to what we fed the loggers because we had loggers in there helping us, foremen in some of the camps, and we had the State Division of Forestry men in as far as they'd go.

Fry: Could you tell me how this got started as an idea and why you were appointed chairman of the committee? I understand that this had nothing to do particularly with your C.F.P.A. activities.

Black: It didn't have, except that most of the work that those boys did in northern California and in southern California consisted of reducing fire hazards in the parks and along roads in the timber area.

Fry: So the camps were probably supported by the timber owners.

Black: They were.

Fry: Was that where the idea started?

Black: I had the idea and I sold it to Vandegrift.

Fry: Because you knew his secretary?

Black: [Laughter] I didn't know her at the time. [Calling to next room] --can I tell this story?

Mary: I want to listen and see if you tell it right.

Black: Come in and correct me.

When did you go in as Rolland A. Vandegrift's secretary, in the Department of Finance?

Mary: In June, 1931.

Black: All right, June, 1931. And I would say by the winter of '31-'32 we were interested in the labor camps, weren't we? And he was the man I had to sell. And I sat in that office of yours until I could see Van. I saw him more times after ten o'clock at night than I ever did during the daytime. And Mary had to sit there as long as he was in his office. That gave us an opportunity to get quite well acquainted in a conversational sort of a way.

Van, I think, was largely responsible for my success in a lot of things, because he went along with it. Mary tells me his father was Dutch, and his son still owns a little timber tract just above Sterling City, right in Dick Colgan's area.

Fry: His father was a timber man, is that right?

Black: He had an interest in forestry. I wouldn't say he was really a timber man, but he had forty acres up there, something with young timber. But Rolland was interested and believed in the labor camps, and he put up the \$100,000 emergency fund to run them. The main thing for the state was to keep the unemployed from coming into the state. They were coming by the hundreds every day, along the railroad tracks: the Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific, down the southern route into southern California primarily, because there they could sleep in the boxcars; it wasn't too cold for them.

Fry: Did you have problems after the camps got started, of people coming into the state in order to work in the camps?

Black: No, we didn't. We still had our publicity going back east. The only trouble we had was that we had so many of the local people that wanted to get into the camp, that we took them in.

The percentage is mentioned in the report, and that was at the later part of having the camps. At first they didn't want to, but later they did.

I unfortunately was known in Sacramento. It seemed to me that every time I stepped out of the hotel, some person would come up and say, "Hello, Mr. Black. You don't know me, but can you arrange so So-and-so, this young man, can get into a labor camp?"

Fry: And yet these people receive no monetary reimbursement for work.

Black: None, none.

Fry: It was just clothing and...

Black: Food. And some of the men left home and bummed so their own family would have one less to feed.

I was motivated, starting, because these men could do wonderful work in fire prevention. Second, we could keep a lot of bums out of the state. Vandegrift took it and believed it. It was the same thing, to me, akin to no more payment by the hour for fighting fire, but a few men will be paid by the month. The same thing.

Fry: Was the governor especially interested in this at the time?

Black: I can't tell you because I did not talk to him, ever, about the labor camps. I just talked to Vandegrift. Vandegrift told the Governor. It was because of the very fine reaction of the general public of the state to the accomplishment of the labor camps, I think, that the Governor made me chairman of the Board of Forestry. I didn't know him from Adam.

Fry: So this kind of led to your Board of Forestry work?

Black: Sure, it would.

Fry: The committee met and drew up plans on the camps on November 24, 1931. Was this when you decided where the camps should be?

Black: We started. We didn't know how many camps or people we were

Black: going to have. And it strained us considerably to get equipment, enough beds primarily. The report mentions the logging camps, abandoned logging camps, shut-down logging camps, where business had gone into a bad slump, that we used. As this thing began to take hold, more and more people offered accommodations to us. Some summer resorts, things of that sort. The men could clean up around the place, do a little bit of value, but at least they were doing some good. The resort owners were reducing their taxes: otherwise they had to pay for the county's taking care of all of these people in their county.

I had comparatively little to do with the southern end of the state. That was turned over to Spence Turner, who was the Los Angeles County forester. Herb Gilman, who was on the Board of Forestry, and others, like Francis Cuttle, and so forth, they pretty well handled that end of the state. In other words, I didn't know enough about southern California, the facilities, or anything else, to arrange for camps in that area.

Fry: I was wondering if there was much difference in operations in southern California.

Black: I don't think there was. Overall, the program was the same. Down there they were in tents, up here we were in buildings. That was the main difference in accommodations.

Fry: Due to weather?

Black: The weather, yes.

Fry: This was done jointly with the State Division of Highways and the Department of Natural Resources. Is that right?

Black: I can't remember that the Highway Department did very much, except they--.

Fry: The appropriations somehow were tied up with the State Division of Highways.

Black: Well, all right, but it was out of the state emergency fund. Now maybe that emergency fund ran out. The emergency fund was separate from Division of Highways appropriation. If we ran out of money in the emergency fund and Vandegrift didn't know where to get it, the highway fund was probably tapped, on the basis that we were cleaning up the highways.

Fry: "Construction funds" I see here [in the report], on the highways.

Black: O.K., all right, we repaired a bridge here or there.

Fry: And the highways didn't fight this?

Black: It was a success, and they weren't fighting the governor. Some of the counties kicked in and helped.

Fry: You really got help from a wide variety of sources, didn't you, including donations?

Black: Donations, oh yes. Tremendous.

Fry: This might almost be illegal today. [Laughter]

Black: Ah--h! I suspect that there might have been some question then, if anybody had raised it, but nobody did.

Fry: It was something that had to be done, obviously.

Black: There was no other way to do it that anybody could think of or that appeared to have worked as well. The Salvation Army collected clothes and, oh Lord, we had everybody. It was a wonderful thing. It was an inspiration just to go see them.

Fry: You sound like you should have been a missionary.

Black: I guess so. Guess I was, but when I tried to convert Dunwoody I couldn't make it; [laughter] but that's another story.

Fry: What about the working hours? That interested me when I read that the average working day was four to six hours. That's pretty short.

Black: I know, but we didn't have much work, it was wintertime; and why should we work them eight hours for nothing? We made it sound worse, for propaganda purposes, than it really was. It was light work; nobody hurt himself overworking, but they accomplished a whole lot. Some of those men worked just as hard as though they were getting a dollar an hour, or two dollars. They didn't slack. And our cooks, I don't know what they were paying cooks then, but they did just as much work as though they were on a full-time job. Of course, they ate a little better maybe, or more often than some of the others.

Fry: Was the administration of the camps, the projects and house-keeping functions, all one head?

Black: There would be a boss in every camp, and he ran that camp. And he ran it according to the very simple rules that he had: four hours work, such clothes as we could get, and a place to sleep, and if you don't work you get out. Just as simple as that. There were no long-winded mimeographed statements of a guide book.

Fry: What about the supervisors for the road work and trail building and so forth? Were they members of the camp, or state employees?

Black: Well, sir, I'd have to look at the record and find out. The bulk of people in charge were regular employees of the State Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service. And I suppose that part of the expenditures of the State Highway Department were just their own men that were on salary running the camp and supervising that kind of work.*

* See also the transcript of taperecording The Forestry Labor Camps of Southern California of 1931-32, 1932-33, with Allen James Hayes and Walter D. Winters interviewed by C. Raymond Clar, Sacramento, California, August 23, 1968. 20 pps. Division of Forestry, The Resources Agency, State of California. Mimeographed. And transcript, California State Labor Camps, Winters of 1931-32, 1932-33, with C. Raymond Clar interviewing several Labor Camp men. 60 pp. State of California, mimeographed.

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Fry: I'm contrasting this in my own mind with the later advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Black: CCC was an entirely different deal. That was all federal money. That was for youth. There again, I'm sure that our labor camps started the CCC, otherwise Secretary of Agriculture Wallace wouldn't have had me come back to Washington and explain it in detail to him and his assistant.

Fry: Maybe you could tell me right here what happened to the state labor camps and then in what way you were involved with the beginning

Black: Well, the labor camps ran as long as they seemed to be needed. And gradually, as more jobs opened up, and so forth, they petered out and were closed. Part of that was because seasonal labor picked up in the summertime. As for the CCC camps, Mr. Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture, called me back to Washington, or rather his assistant did. And I testified before some Labor Department committee, explaining in as much detail as I could the type of work we did and what we had done. The Civilian Conservation Corps took the program we had, but it paid the boys, and they put an army man in charge of every camp. The people in Washington were all for it because they saw what our labor camps had done: cleared up miles and miles and miles of road and did a lot of work in many of the state parks. It wasn't all wasted.

Fry: If you can come across the transcript of your testimony or give me a clue about...

Black: I'll never come across the testimony here; there was probably none made. I left Washington, D.C. the same day; I wanted to get back home. And the government didn't even pay my expenses, so I wasn't staying any longer than necessary. But it was on the basis of my testimony, as I understand it, that the committee recommended the legislation.*

* According to the CFPA Reports for 1933, Secretary of Agriculture Wallace had asked each governor to send a representative to Washington to prepare for the CCC, and Governor Rolph sent Black, who stayed over to consult also with the Secretary of Labor's office. See Appendix F.

Fry: This was in that first hundred days?

Black: I think so. It was early in the Roosevelt administration. But as far as the committee was concerned, I was the only one called in to testify before the measure was adopted by Congress.

Fry: You were the only one to testify before the committee?

Black: As far as I know, yes. One of them after the meeting (I can't tell you which one it was now) said something to the effect, "This is all the testimony we need," something of that sort. But I got no copy or transcript of it, and I wasn't interested enough to try to.

In connection with starting the CCC, I should mention Francis Cuttle. He was a member of Governor Richardson's Board of Forestry. At some time he made a suggestion that camps be established with a small payment per month. I never saw anything in our papers, only have the stories people down south told me in connection with it. But I feel that the combination of his suggestion plus the success of the labor camps is what made President Roosevelt go ahead with the CCC.

Fry: Cuttle made this suggestion to whom?

Black: I don't know. That is a part I can't help you with. But I don't want to say I did all the things that were to start the camps; I want to tell you what I did and give him credit for recommending something along that line. To whom and how widely it was distributed, I don't know.

Fry: Well, fine. We're primarily concerned with the relationship between the labor camps and CCC, anyhow. There probably were a number of people here and on the East coast that had some contributions to make to the rise of CCC.

Black: There's no question about that.

Because I had been back in Washington, this deputy, or Assistant Secretary or whatever his title was (a very fine person) kept me on the phone about every day and would ask me, "Mr. Black, who do we put in charge of this thing in Portland, Oregon? In Idaho? Who do we put in charge of Los Angeles? Who is the proper man to put in charge of this and that?" He seemed to think that the West Coast was about as small as that little huddle of small states there in New England.

Black: And I told him, "Los Angeles is 440 miles from here, and I don't know."

Fry: So this was deciding on the appointments, then.

Black: Yes, who was to run things.

Fry: This was primarily for the camps that were under the Forest Service, or the national parks, or state parks, or all three?

Black: No. In some places they were inside the national forests. I guess later some of them were in the national parks. I don't remember. I knew the lumberjacks were out of work. I recommended oh, I guess twenty logging camp foremen and superintendents as civilian managers of these various camps in the north; men who knew the work, men who knew the tools and were used to running men. The army had a man in each camp for discipline.

For some reason (I'm going to have to break this off in a few minutes; we have to be in San Francisco at the cocktail hour) the number of things that they asked me to do would seem to be completely out of order in view of the size of the state. I did what I could. Then I seemed to be the one whom people thought they should see if they wanted to get into a camp. Pretty soon the camps were full, and I probably made more enemies with that than I did with any other one thing, when I said, "I'm sorry, I just am not in charge of those who are allowed in. I will speak to somebody. If there is a vacancy maybe your friend can get in."

I ran into one up at a filling station, at Yuba City it was, last summer, who was very proud of having been in one of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. He told me what a wonderful job they did for him at that period. I don't know how the devil--I just went in for gasoline and we got to talking. Anyway, they expected me to do a lot of things that were humanly impossible because I didn't know.

Fry: But you entered CCC before it had become a law, right at the very early days.

Black: Yes.

Fry: I'd like to check with you (I know that you have to leave) about the influence of political appointments in either organization. Was there very much?

Black: None that I know of. None that I know of, except that after the camps got to running quite a while, the postmaster in Sacramento did seem to have influence in recommending who would go into the camp.

Fry: This was CCC?

Black: CCC. There was absolutely no political activity in the state labor camps. And there wasn't in the CCC camps at the start. Now, what happened after they got going or what happened in other states I don't know. Only one man that I know of could conceivably have had his finger in the pie, something like who gets these temporary jobs with the federal government; now on the various camps it seemed to be congressmen's sons or nephews, or something of that sort--the underprivileged, poverty-stricken boys. [Laughter] And I imagine that did develop elsewhere in the CCC, but the job didn't pay much.

Fry: By that time you weren't too closely connected with it, I guess.

Black: I was out by that time. After the thing got established I had no further connection with it at all. It was only in the--oh, I'd say first ninety days of it, that I had much to do with CCC. With the labor camps, I was in it from start to finish.

ATTEMPTS TO DISMISS STATE FORESTER PRATT

Black as Head of the State Board of Forestry

Fry: Let's move on into your experiences on the Board of Forestry. What dates were you on the Board of Forestry?

Black: Governor Rolph took office in 1931. It was after the labor camps were started and were successful.*

Fry: And this was largely as a result of your activities with the labor camps?

Black: Probably.

Fry: How did you get in, and who asked you?

Black: Well, they just bounced up and appointed me. I don't remember the details. But the labor camps had been successful; Vandegritt and I had a great deal of confidence in each other. If it hadn't

*From a letter from Mr. C. R. Clar, Assistant Executive Officer, Department of Conservation, Division of Forestry, Sacramento, Calif.:

"Mrs. Fry has asked that I inform you of the dates S. Rexford Black served as a member of the California State Board of Forestry.

James Rolph appointed Black on May 24, 1934. In July Black was elected chairman by his fellow members.

Governor Rolph died on June 2, 1934. Yet the same Board continued to function under Merriam. That is, it did until the big brawl of December 15, 1934, when Black plus three friends tried to oust State Forester Pratt. Undoubtedly, the Governor requested the Board to refrain from meeting again.

On March 6, 1937, Merriam made his first appointments to his own forestry commission. At that date Arnold Kunody was appointed vice Black. [Vice = "succeeding" (Latin, abl. of vicis).] Legally then, Black served from May 24, 1934 to March 6, 1937."

Black: been for him, there'd have been no labor camps. They worked out, as the report shows, with considerable satisfaction to various sections of the state.

Now C. S. Howard--Charlie Howard, the owner of the race horse, Seabiscuit--had been appointed chairman of the Board of Forestry because prior to that ex-governor Pardee had been chairman under Governor Richardson. Governor Rolph, not knowing very much about the Board of Forestry, thought that was a pretty high-toned deal. Charlie Howard never attended a meeting. He wasn't interested. That was not anything he wanted; therefore, I was appointed.

Fry: And you didn't even own a horse.

Black: I didn't even own a horse. [Laughter] I had an automobile though, which was better transportation.

Fry: There were a number of events leading up to the attempt to remove Pratt from office in 1936. Was this something that Rolph was aware of at the time that he appointed you, do you think?

Black: No. Oh, no. No, he probably didn't know who the State Forester was, or care. Pratt was kept on because Pratt was interested in the State Division of Forestry nursery out near Davis, growing trees for planting along streets, for cities, for parks, and things of that sort. And in that connection he was well acquainted with John McLaren, the Golden Gate Park superintendent who served so many years. McLaren and Pratt were friends. And Mr. McLaren went up to Sacramento and told Governor Rolph that Pratt was a wonderfully fine man, that he should be kept. And that was the end of it.

Fry: So that fixed him up with that governor.

Black: Yes. That was it.

Fry: But there were successive governors, also, who refused to remove him every time the situation arose.

Black: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, because Pratt had the support of the United States Forest Service. He suited them.

Fry: And you think that the Forest Service had some influence with, for instance, Governors Merriam and Olson?

Black: I won't say that, but the Forest Service had employees spread all over the state that could talk to others and get the Society

Black: of American Foresters, and so forth, all in favor of keeping him.

Fry: What did Vandegrift think about him? I understand he was kind of the power behind the Rolph administration.

Black: On the financial matters, yes. On appointments, I think no. Not to my knowledge. Vandegrift's recommendation as against McLaren's wouldn't have counted anywhere. Appointments were strictly political as far as Rolph was concerned; that was the thing he was interested in.

Fry: So that for political appointees, McLaren's word was considered higher than Vandegrift's?

Black: Yes, oh yes.

Fry: I wonder if we could just have a rundown of events leading up to the 1934 controversy. I went through some old newspapers and pegged a few dates here*. The first one I noticed was in October of 1932, when there was this attempt to remove Pratt from office while Pratt was at a meeting of the Association of State Foresters, in the East. Do you remember that?

Black: No.

Fry: And there were a couple of letters written from William A. Smith, the governor's secretary. Do you remember?

Black: I remember Smith very well. But I don't remember any letters. To the State Foresters?

Fry: No. Telling the Director of Natural Resources, Dan Blood, to remove Pratt from office. And I think that this directive originally came from the State Board of Forestry, of which you were chairman at that time.

Black: Could be.

Fry: I thought maybe there had been an earlier attempt too, to remove Pratt while you were the Board chairman.

Black: I don't think there was an earlier one, can't remember. It was sort of a running deal. Mr. Rider, the deputy State Forester, ran the Division of Forestry in anything that was personnel that amounted to anything. Then, Pratt was interested in the nursery and attended all of the meetings everywhere and talked to the ladies' clubs, and so forth. He was a good public relations man, a very nice man. He had a wife that was far smarter than he was, and she helped him tremendously. But I can't

* See appendix B.

Black: remember a single constructive thing that he ever suggested.

That goes back...let's see... It must have been 1917 when I was over on Mt. Tamalpais. There was some reason I had to go over to call on the Division of Forestry in the office, which was then in the Forum building, at 9th and K Street, in Sacramento. Rider, the deputy, had an office. Pratt had an office. There was a girl in the lobby-type office, reception room. And they had two girls in the other office. That was the total staff then, other than a half a dozen men in the field. As I remember it, their total appropriation was something like \$25,000 a year. Now, I can't prove that, but I think it could be looked up if the record wanted it.

Fry: Yes, a very small operation.

Black: Yes. Then later I think we put a bill through both houses asking, I don't know whether it was \$200,000 a year or \$400,000 for the biennium. When Stevenot was Director of Natural Resources, I think. It was vetoed by Governor Young. And Pratt wouldn't make a move to support any appropriation that we had. If the governor said, "Stay out!" why, he stayed out, and made absolutely no effort that I know of to increase appropriations or stir up any interest that would.

Fry: For his own department?

Black: For his own department. In other words, he knew that if he kept his mouth shut he had a job, and if he talked out of turn he might lose it. Maybe that's what they all do, I don't know.

Fry: Just on the surface, it would seem that a man like this might possibly be the kind of person industry would want to have, that he could be easily controlled by industry. You wouldn't have to worry about regulation or anything.

Black: Oh, no, you didn't.

Fry: Was industry fairly happy with him?

Black: No.

Fry: No? '

Black: I represented the industry as head of C.F.P.A.

Fry: I know. That's why I asked you.

Black: We wanted improvement in fire control. We needed it. We had practically none. Even the money that came back, under the provisions of Clarke-McNary, was still used down in the farm lands. Most of our timber, (that of the C.F.P.A. members) fortunately, was inside the national forests, where we paid the Forest Service for the protection.

Fry: You mean privately owned timber inside the forests?

Black: Yes. Millions of acres. And yet fires would sweep up from the state area into the forest areas, because they weren't controlled; they started in the brush lands down below, or in areas just outside of the national forests. They would sweep in and do a lot of damage. And it looked like nothing was going to be done about it.

Fry: I think it might be a good idea if we got your story on the meeting in December of 1934, in which Pratt was really removed from office by your board, but the action was stopped farther up. This was on the civil service matter: he was about to get a permanent civil service status.

Black: Yes. As I say, I think Mr. McLaren was the deciding touch on this, although there were a great many other people that were opposed to his removal. He had friends, naturally; he'd been in office a long time. He had never done anything to create any friction or opposition. I could say he had just never done anything, other than the nursery, almost. Period. I think the fact is that after his removal the Division of Forestry made tremendous progress. By that time I was long gone. I had nothing to do with it.

Fry: The frustration with him seemed to be quite widespread. And yet he got good press. Why was that? I think this might be an important point to explain for future historians.

Black: Will you shut off the machine?

Fry: Don't you want it made a matter of record?

Black: I can't prove this. I have a feeling that the office of State Forester had one of the Sacramento Bee reporters on his payroll. As a public relations man, so to speak.

Fry: A sort of information and education man for the state, who also doubled as a reporter? *

Black: His primary job was reporter for the Sacramento Bee. But he

* C. Raymond Clar reports that Homer Roberts, a free lance writer, was hired at \$150 a month by the State Board of Forestry in a "weak attempt at fire prevention education". From State Board of Forestry records, Sacramento.

Black: was also in some way remunerated from the Division of Forestry. I, however, have no written proof of that. And I'm not going to mention the names of some people who informed me of the conditions there, even though they're all dead.

Fry: Sometimes that can be checked on if someone's interested.

Black: If someone is interested. They could look up the payroll.

Fry: In this December meeting, which brought about Professor Fritz's quick resignation from the board--do you remember? He was on the board for about two days and then resigned.*

Black: Gosh, I don't remember. What year was that?

Fry: This was '34. I felt as I read that this probably was the leading event which brought about the investigation of you by the Society of American Foresters.

Black: Could be.

Fry: I thought you might want to go ahead and give your story of how events led up to this.

Black: I haven't the slightest idea. In fact, I couldn't remember, until you mentioned it, that that had happened. Presumably, the discussion within the Board of Forestry--I don't know whether Swift Berry was on the board at that time or not, probably he was. He was also a member of the Society.

Fry: The board was changed quite a lot in that one week, because Fritz was appointed and then he resigned. Then another man, Bolce, was appointed just before your meeting that Saturday, according to the papers.

Black: I don't remember him.

Fry: This provided the last vote needed for a majority on the board for the vote to oust Pratt.

Black: I would say that Mr. Fritz, of the University, and a very strong enthusiast for the Society, was bound not to say anything detrimental against any Society member, and rather than vote, resigned.

Fry: Because he didn't want to say anything detrimental against Pratt, you mean, or against you?

Black: I would say Pratt was the governing factor rather than I. At least Fritz was caught between two, so he quit.

*See clippings, Appendix B, primary copies of interview.

Fry: He didn't want to vote against Pratt?

Black: Or perhaps against me. I can't answer that; I don't remember well enough. Swift Berry was on the board at that time, and he might know. He was another member of the Society of American Foresters. He still is. Was later state senator from his district. [Berry died June, 1967--Black]

I've forgotten that Fritz deal. Fritz was very strong, he did a lot of work in the redwood region. And the industry up there thought a great deal of him for what he did.

Fry: Apparently they needed his representation on the board from the redwood region.

Black: Yes. Prior to that time, the post had been filled by one of the operators or owners of redwood that had been on the board, pretty much; but not always: as a matter of fact, Governor Olson later appointed a dentist from Fort Bragg to represent the redwood industry, which some of us thought was a little out of order.

Fry: You mean he didn't even own a redwood tree?

Black: No conception of what the problems or conditions or anything else were. There were a couple of other examples.

Fry: So you felt that Fritz would be a good appointee, then?

Black: I thought he would, yes. Yes indeed. Technically, he certainly qualified. And he could have represented the redwood industries from the forestry standpoint exceedingly well.

Fry: I made some notes last night, and I wonder if you agree with this, that on your board the pro-Pratt people included H. S. Gilman from Los Angeles, Ernest Dudley from Exeter, and B. A. McAllaster from Piedmont; and then of course, deputy forester Rider.

Black: Rider was not on the board.

Fry: But did he sit in on the board?

Black: Oh, yes. He'd attend meetings.

Fry: Yes. Ex-officio.

Black: B. A. McAllaster was a director of the California Forest Protective Association and Land Commissioner of Southern Pacific Railroad..

Fry: Wasn't Swift Berry also in California Protective Association?

Black: Yes. But I can't remember B. A. McAllaster being on there. I didn't know he was ever a member of the board. Of course, the Southern Pacific owned redwood, the Albion Lumber Company, which would make him a possible representative, and I don't see anybody from the redwood there other than B. A. McAllaster. I can't remember William Bolce at all.

Fry: I guess I still don't understand what a man like Gilman, for instance, could lose by taking a public stand against Pratt.

Black: I don't know. Gilman was from Los Angeles. The Los Angeles County did most of the fire protection work. Pratt's activities were in the counties further south, as I remember it. Herb Gilman was a very capable man, very capable. And his primary interest was in watershed because he was in the water business. So he would have applauded Pratt's use of fire control funds in the watershed lands.

As to Earnest Dudley, he was a former Forest Service employee and member of the Society of American Foresters, and was a rancher at the time around Exeter. I don't think that Gilman was ever a member of the Society of American Foresters; I don't think he would qualify for membership. Ernest Dudley would; I think he was a Yale graduate, as I remember. I met his brother in Duluth, and I'm pretty sure his brother also was a graduate of Yale. It was quite a long time ago. The brother was a very, very capable man. I think that's all I'll say on that.

Fry: Just as we were getting to the good part. You know this can be put under seal for any length of time that you want.

Black: It isn't going to make a bit of difference to me when it's reported. I'm not ashamed of anything I did. If the conditions arose again, or similar ones, I would make the same effort.

Fry: I thought perhaps some of the hesitation would have been in describing some of the political power that was being wielded in southern California at that time.

Black: I don't know. The individuals that voted on the board were not primarily politicians. Herb Gilman certainly was not. B.

Black: A. McAllaster was not. Swift Berry was not interested in politics at that time. It was after he was out as manager of the Michigan California Lumber Company that he ran for the State Senate--and was elected. I worked in his campaigns. But that was after this was all over.

Fry: As it happened, Pratt did weather this and got his appointment converted to a permanent position in the civil service. Did this make it much more difficult to get rid of him by board action?

Black: Oh, yes. You had to prove charges, and so forth, before a commission, and so on. Prior to that it had been a purely political appointment. But once he was under civil service you had to spell out and prove beyond a doubt that he was not doing his work properly, or was doing it improperly. Well, how can you do that? If a man sits and does nothing, improves nothing, pushes nothing--. That is so darn typical of some of the ways that state affairs were run that that would be taken as standard, especially in a civil service job.

Fry: So this 1934 attempt was really sort of a last chance, then, to remove Pratt from office?

Black: Oh, that was the last chance, yes. That's why it was probably pretty hastily put together.

Fry: After you got your vote from the board to oust Pratt, nothing seemed to happen. This action had to be approved by Director of Natural Resources Nordenholdt.

Black: Yes.

Fry: Why did he never approve it?

Black: I don't know; I haven't the slightest idea.

Fry: What was the governor's attitude about this? I think Merriam was in office by this time, as a new governor, and he was very closemouthed to the papers.

Black: Yes. But I would say Merriam would be governed by what the people in southern California thought.

Fry: This would have been Hedges?

Black: Walton Hedges was on the board under Rolph. He was a cattleman, but not from southern California.

Fry: I think he was on at this time too.

Black: That could be, he could have been. I don't know.

Fry: I thought maybe Hedges would have had some influence with the governor in this.

Black: I doubt that he would have had the influence with Merriam, if he had any at all, as compared with what he had with Rolph. They knew each other very well. But I haven't any idea how he stood with Merriam.

Fry: I don't have any idea of southern California's attitude on this.

Black: Well, generally speaking, I think...I can't say, I can't remember well enough to say.

Fry: But this was Merriam's rule of thumb: southern California's attitudes?

Black: Yes.

Oh, I guess we forget the unpleasant things, and that's helped my memory to slip.

Fry: It's too bad we have to talk about something that seems unpleasant.

Black: Well, I was very sorry that we couldn't get a better state forester. I certainly was and I still am. I think we would have been far better off in the saving of timber and the development of forestry had the change been made when it was first suggested. Very, very definitely.

Fry: Did you get the feeling that there were a number of people who felt this way too?

Black: Oh, heavens yes. In private conversation there was no question about it, but when it came to formally getting it on record, that was a different matter. Very different. There were many people in the Forest Service who thought Pratt was incompetent, made no bones about it--privately. When it came to a showdown on what to do, it blew over because the rank and file had no say on this. It would be just the top men in the Forest Service, it was their opinion that counted--I don't know whether it was political or otherwise, or whether they were satisfied, I don't know. I don't worry about it.

Fry: Did you know anything about Bevier Show's attitude towards Pratt? He was Regional Forester here for the Forest Service.

Black: I can't say that I did. And, as between his official job, and interest in forests, and his interest in the Society of American Foresters, where it is verboten to criticize a fellow member, I can't answer.

Fry: Hmmm. So he may have been in a dilemma here, you think?

Black: Quite possibly. Quite possibly, yes.

Fry: William R. Schofield was the one proposed to take the place of Pratt as State Forester.*

Black: That's right. We tried, and I tried, to get a couple of men out of the Forest Service to say they would take Pratt's job. They were told by their district office, "No." I'm sure of that. One of them told me that. And I presume he was telling the truth. So, lacking anybody from the Forest Service, lacking anybody in the state service I thought was competent, we turned to Schofield, whom we thought was competent. At that time he was with the State Board of Equalization.

Fry: What did he do with the Board of Equalization?

Black: I can't answer that, I don't know the details. I know in 1930 I was gone for nine months and Schofield pinch hit for me, did his job and mine too--the Legislature was not in session. He did very well at that. I can't tell you where he was or what it was. Of course he succeeded me as secretary of C.F.P.A. in 1943.

Fry: I ran across the most intriguing little feature box in one of these old newspapers; it mentioned the name of Mr. Clem Whitaker, who was running Campaigns Incorporated in San Francisco, which had been, I think, a rather large factor in Governor Merriam's victory.

Black: Yes.

Fry: And which apparently also had some connections in Southern California.

*

Schofield, William R., typed transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Amelia Fry, University of California General Library Regional Cultural History Project. (Berkeley, 1968). In Bancroft Library. (In process).

Black: Oh, yes.*

Fry: You mentioned that Merriam was more or less sensitive to southern California.

Black: Yes.

Fry: What can you tell me about Whitaker?

Black: Clem Whitaker was an outstanding man in his field. He was a reporter for a while in Sacramento. Then he started the Capital News Service, in which he shipped out information, goings-on in activities in Sacramento, to newspapers all over the state. Later he got out of that and started his Campaigns Incorporated and spent full time on campaigns, did a marvelous job. I have the greatest respect for Clem Whitaker's ability.

He was divorced from his first wife and married the second one, who is now running the Whitaker-Baxter.

Fry: Oh, Leone Baxter.

Black: At first he was a poverty-stricken boy, had trouble taking care of his family. Eventually he had a suite of rooms in the Palace Hotel. And as time went on, moved into the Fairmont. I have a picture somewhere of Clem and Leone, and Mrs. Black and myself with our two children at the Fairmont having dinner next to that swimming pool they have down there in the basement in the Tonga Room. He was a very close friend of mine. I thought the world of him.

Fry: I guess, then, he had a kind of organized political support, which could have helped you a great deal in California Forest Protection Association matters, is that right?

Black: Yes, but I did not attempt in any way to use that. Clem was my friend; this was not his business so far as I could see.

Fry: But I think he too was apparently concerned about Pratt.

Black: He knew Pratt. He'd known him for years, known he was no good. He didn't think he was a very capable man in the job, but he had bigger and more important things to consider in his business than something like that.

Fry: The article in the newspaper was just simply a letter from Whitaker to a lady in southern California, who apparently had control of some of the political interests in that end of the

Fry: state. (And I don't remember her name.) He wrote that she should give support to you and to the board in helping to oust Pratt. I don't remember the date, either.

Black: That could very well be. I don't remember ever seeing it. I didn't know that Clem...

Fry: It looked like a note that he just had dashed off on behalf of a friend.

Black: Quite possibly that's just what it was. But I did not ask him at any time to enter into this. And, so far as I know, he didn't. This is the first I've ever heard of such a letter.

Fry: I think this was at that frustrating point where the board had taken action to remove Pratt, but you couldn't pry loose any action on the part of the Director of Natural Resources or the governor.

Black: It's a shame that it didn't go through at that time. I think the state would have been much further ahead, much further ahead. On the other hand, I would say of the two successors, Mr. Schofield and Swede Nelson, I think perhaps Swede was better fitted for that job, probably, than Schofield.

Fry: So the state did get a good man in, even if you had to wait six more years.

Black: That's right. Got a real good man. And I think the proof of that is that he was made Director of Natural Resources. And the promotion was certainly not politically inspired. That was ability. As far as I know that's the first really good Director of Natural Resources the state has had. Frankly, I'm not in touch with what's going on now very much, haven't been interested enough to know.

Fry: This seems to be a common appraisal of Nelson.

The Society of American Foresters Inquiry*

Fry: What brought on, then, this aggressive action, the charges

*

See appendix B.

Fry: against you before the SAF? And do you have any idea who these people were?

Black: Oh, I would say that--I have no idea of who they were in any factual way. I suspect quite a few of them, I think I could name 'em, but I'm not going to because I don't know. Furthermore, I didn't care, and still don't.

Fry: What did they represent?

Black: They represented themselves as members of the Society of American Foresters, regardless of what position they may have held in industry or in public service. So it was an individual vote on the part of the member.

Fry: This was not just a manifestation, then, of any struggle going on between public and private forestry?

Black: No, I don't think so. Not directly. As a matter of fact, there were very few foresters in private industry at that time, very few compared to the total. I would say the University of California had more members in the Society than the whole of private industry had at that time.

Fry: That's what I was thinking, that the SAF was made up primarily of public foresters. And you were an industry representative.

Black: That's right.

Fry: So I had a very simple picture in my mind.

Black: Well, I think you've got it. [Laughter]

Fry: You mean it may have been a hostility toward industry?

Black: To a degree. Now, the local Forest Service was never happy that Greeley allowed the Clarke-McNary reimbursements to come to the Forest Protective Association. And as soon as they could, they knocked it out.

Fry: This was the Retional Office of the Forest Service.

Black: Regional Forest Service, not the Regional Forester, Bevier Show. That's the way I was informed.

Fry: I just remembered. There's another theory on this that you might like to comment on, and that is it was sort of the Yale

Fry: foresters versus the Michigan foresters. Do you think that held any water?

Black: Oh, I don't know, I don't think so. I don't really think that. That would be going way out into left field to find something. I won't say there's any love lost between those two outfits. When I was at the University of Michigan, we didn't hve any adverse attitude towards Yale in any way that I can remember. In fact, when I was able to go see a Yale and Harvard football game, we yelled for Yale. But I can't remember anything at all that would indicate that there was any, I never knew that there was any friction.

Fry: I think that this was referring to a faction within the SAF.

Black: It could be. I don't know; I never heard of it before.

Fry: It may have been two Yale foresters and two Michigan foresters, and that was as far as it went. You can't tell how pervasive something like this really was.

Black: Oh well, it's barely possible, but it is something beyond my knowledge. I just thought the boys wanted to get rid of me, and did. Look at the money I've saved all these years by not paying dues.

Fry: And it doesn't seem to have really cut down much on your income as a forester.

Black: Well, maybe it made it. Who knows? I would say my job in the Forest Protective Association comes under the head of public relations as we now know it, and that includes the work in the Legislature. So from the Forest Protective Association, I became vice-president of Weyerhaeuser Sales Company in St. Paul. Again a public relations job. From that I skipped to senior vice-president of Georgia Pacific. There the public relations had to go. That was a matter of executive activity, the management of the plywood mills and the sawmills, purchase of timber. I got tired of that and with a few friends started a little plywood plant down in Santa Clara. Just--if you'll shut that off, I'll tell you what the salary was.

Fry: Oh, nobody will be worried about your salary.

Black: Well, I don't know. When you mentioned did it injure me in any way, I rather feel it probably helped me. I think that, had I won out in the SAF inquiry here, I'd have stayed here.

- Fry: So anyway, this whole SAF controversy really seems to have worked to your advantage.
- Black: I don't think being thrown out of the Society injured me in any way with the industry for which I was working.
- Fry: What was Dunwoody's interest in all of this? Does he fit into the SAF inquiry?
- Black: He was not a member so he had no part of it as far as I know.
- Fry: You don't think he was in the background anywhere?
- Black: Oh well, he may have been there. But I have no way of knowing. I don't know who was on the investigating committee. I don't care.
- Fry: You never were present for your own defense during the SAF hearing, is that right?
- Black: That's right.
- Fry: Did you ever write anything in your own defense?
- Black: No. I was never asked to. I didn't even know what was going on until it was all over. Reminds me of an item in the paper today: some man will be hanged just as soon as the trial is over. [Laughter]
- Fry: It was H. H. Chapman who actually conducted your investigation.
- Black: I suppose so. I might have known at the time, but I...
- Fry: Then when the counter-charges were leveled against Chapman, and they had another investigation, remember this?
- Black: No, I don't. When was that?
- Fry: Let me run down this chronology for you. In January of 1935 the charges against you were presented to the SAF council. Who were the key figures in your support at that time?
- Black: Didn't know any. I didn't know what was going on that time, or if I did, I've forgotten it.
- Fry: Swift Berry and E. T. Allen did write letters in your behalf.
- Black: That could be.

Fry: I think that this is a matter of record. The investigation ended in September. The verdict, on which I think there was one dissenting vote on the part of the council, was tendered on November 20, 1935. Then there were counter-charges filed against Chapman for the method of conducting the inquiry in your case.

Black: Oh?

Fry: The charges of improper investigation were based on the fact that he had published a letter in SAF Affairs recounting the whole thing and making some remarks against Swift Berry and E. T. Allen, which they claimed hurt them professionally.

Black: I see. Could be. I didn't know that.

Fry: And Colonel Greeley, then, was the chairman of this second investigation. Were you aware of Greeley's views at this time?

Black: No. I didn't even know there was a second investigation.

Fry: And Dean Dana, from Michigan.

Black: Sam Dana?

Fry: Yes. Dana ran off the investigation at that time.

Black: I don't know Dana. I knew that he was appointed, working at the University of Michigan, School of Forestry. I never met him. I didn't know anything about him.

Fry: So, actually, your knowledge of all this began when---

Black: I found out I was fired. That's the first I knew.

Fry: You mean when you had been taken off the rolls of SAF.

Black: Thrown out of the Society. That's right.

Fry: How were you notified about this?

Black: I think it was by letter, which I undoubtedly didn't save.

Fry: [Laughter] That's the kind you don't want to frame.

Black: No, not particularly. I'll say that throwing me out of the Society didn't bother me at all. My conscience is completely

- Black: clear about what I tried to do. And if the Society was so constituted as to protect a man as incompetent as I believed Pratt to be, I didn't want to be a member of the Society.
- Fry: Did this have something to do with your removal from the State Board of Forestry, or was that just because another governor came in?
- Black: That's when another governor came in. Rolph died in office, and Merriam, who was lieutenant governor, took over. Naturally the whole board served at the governor's pleasure. So I'm sure with all that commotion that I wasn't reappointed. I don't know whether Swift Berry was or not. I don't think he was.
- Fry: Merriam was in office during all of this 1934 and 1935 business. Really, what I was wondering was, did this put an end to your efforts to get Pratt ousted, or were you able to continue to work toward this?
- Black: I felt he should be thrown out, but it looked to me as though it were hopeless in view of the action that had been taken. He was no better. But the number of people supporting him--and some on the board that supported him felt just as I did about him, as far as his competency was concerned.

Some years later I was asked to rejoin the Society of American Foresters but wrote the Society that I was not interested in being a member of a Society that supported incompetents in public office. *

Attempt to Reorganize the Board of Forestry, 1940

- Fry: Didn't C.F.P.A. take an active part in the constitutional amendment to reorganize the State Board of Forestry in 1940?
- Black: Yes, if C.F.P.A. had had any money later, we could have had our own board of forestry by direct representatives. But we didn't have any money then either. One of the major supporters, incidentally, of that constitutional amendment on the Board of Forestry representation was President Sproul of the University. He made a radio talk that was very good. And I was told that

* S.A.F. records show that Black did rejoin the Society about two years later. See letter, Nov. 9, 1968, from Rex Black to Amelia Fry, in appendix B.

Black: if I could get \$500 somewhere, we could have that recorded. Once on records, we could have that speech made all over the state, and that was probably fifty different stations. But we couldn't get the money.

I think that would have turned the trick: had we had someone who was widely known, who was highly thought of--like Mr. Sproul--broadcast that speech we'd have passed it. It was easy to pass it through the Legislature, because Governor Olson, a Democrat, was in; the Legislature was Republican and they were tickled to death to take away the appointive power of any board, so it sailed through the Legislature with the greatest of ease. But from there it was very different then, because a great many interests were against us--including the state administration, of course.

Fry: Oh, they were.

Black: You see, we were going to have those members appointed. For instance, the cattlemen would nominate their representative; the wool growers would nominate theirs; the redwood people, theirs; the pine people, theirs; general agriculture, theirs; and so on, and the nominees would be appointed.

Fry: Nominations would be tantamount to appointment then?

Black: Yes. Instead of selection by the governor. That would have given continuity so that the board would have dared to speak up in favor of appropriations and things that they didn't when they were political appointees.

Fry: They were not independent at all.

Black: Oh, no.

Fry: This also, as I understand it, would have staggered the board terms a year apart.

Black: Yes. You've heard of it. Isn't it funny--I didn't remember a darn thing about it at first.

Fry: What was there in it that brought on the opposition of the state administration?

Black: It was some cluck in San Francisco--I've forgotten his name. He said, "We don't want any more boards, we've got enough of them." He didn't even read enough to know that we already had

Black: a Board of Forestry; it was just a different way of appointing it. He turned out a lot of handbills, and was on the radio opposing it. I've forgotten his name, and I don't know who paid for his handbills and radio time.

Fry: The change that this would have made, I believe, in the State Forester position was threatening to some of the employees of the State Division of Forestry, I guess. Wasn't the idea to take away the civil service status of the State Forester?

Black: Of the State Forester, yes.

Fry: But not of the employees?

Black: Not of them, no.

Fry: Was there some confusion on this point?

Black: As a matter of fact, the State Forester had been appointed by the governor. Then he was changed to civil service status. (When Swede Nelson was selected to replace him, he was appointed; he was not civil service.) All the other employees were civil service.

Fry: Well, why was this objection brought up by the state employees?

Black: They were working for Pratt and Pratt wanted to hold his job. I had been licked before, and they had to play ball. In other words, civil service is one thing, but if the boss doesn't like you, you don't get promoted very fast.

Fry: After the amendments defeat I think that it was mentioned in your annual reports of C.F.P.A. that you recommended that this be reintroduced.

Black: I don't know. I couldn't even remember the darn thing until I saw some of my old notes on it this week.

Fry: Yes, you were involved in so many things. According to your C.F.P.A. annual report, the point was made that this provision should be clarified so that the employees would know that their jobs were not in danger.

Black: That undoubtedly is so. It's a blank, a complete blank in my mind until I happened to read that clipping about it. I'd forgotten all about that.

OTHER FORESTERS (COMMENTS)

Fry: I'd like to get some of your comments on other key figures in the picture at that time and how you feel that they were contributing to this whole picture of both forestry and the problem of the State Forester.

Black: Such as what? [Clock strikes]

Fry: Wait till that clock stops. Now we have your clock down for posterity.

You've already mentioned Mr. Colgan and I wondered if you could add anything about Mr. Clyde Martin.

Black: Clyde Martin was the forester for the Western Pine Association, and at one time was stationed in San Francisco, had an office across the hall from mine. At that time he was just representing the Association in California. He was a forester.

Fry: I thought that you might make a statement or two on what his contributions to forestry in California were.

Black: Well, I would much rather that you ask someone like Dick Colgan, who was there and active during that time.

Fry: Just tell me if you really weren't familiar with any of these people.

Black: I just can't put my finger on any one particularly.

Fry: Did you know T. K. Oliver very well?

Black: Oh yes, Tom Oliver. Yes, and his father, George Oliver, general manager of Hobart Mills Lumber Company, with timber holdings just outside of Truckee. Yes, I knew George Oliver. He took over the job of being father to me in the absence of my own out here, giving me a great deal of very good advice, including to quit smoking these cigarettes. He'd take them, throw them away and hand me a cigar. So I always made it a point to pull out a cigarette when I saw George--and presto, there was a real good cigar. [Laughter. And puffing.] His son Tom was a forester, a graduate of California. First class man. He's up

Black: at Medford for a subsidiary of the Cyprus Corporation, which has a sawmill and timber there. He's a very capable man.

Fry: Would you like to comment on what sort of a person Colonel Greeley was?

Black: Greeley was an outstandingly competent, able man. As honest, as straightforward as any person could possibly be. Did more to make the U.S. Forest Service really something than any other man that's been the head of it, in my opinion.

Fry: Now, on the California scene, there was Show and also the head of the experiment station, Ed Kotok.

Black: Brother-in-law of Show.

Fry: That's right. Did you know Mr. Kotok?

Black: Very well, yes. Before he went with the experiment station he was in charge of the fire control work for the Forest Service when it was in the Ferry Building.

Fry: Did you work much with Kotok either in fire or in the Forest Experiment Station?

Black: On fire, yes; Experiment Station, no. He was a very capable person. I saw him very frequently. The Forest Service had a much better system of fire control than the state ever had. They were protecting private timber inside of the National Forest boundaries. They had a lot more money too. On fire matters we had much in common. I lost contact with the Experiment Station. There was nothing going on in the Experiment Station that was of any particular interest to me, but he was one of the most capable men I met in the whole U.S. Forest Service.

Fry: You were doing your studies on spark arresting and things like this. If I remember right, the Forest Service at that time was also doing some rather primitive studies on what really causes fires. Cigarettes, for instance.

Black: I think those went on constantly, permanently. I'm sure they knew about my spark arrester studies. And I haven't the slightest idea what they were doing on their studies.

There was Walter Mulford, the head of the forestry school. I knew him very well, but I had no actual dealings with him. The school of forestry, as far as I was concerned, was not equipped nor particularly interested in the type of work I was doing.

LATER CAREER

Weyerhaeuser

Fry: Is there anything else that you would like to fill in on what you did when you went to Minnesota? Was your office in St. Paul?

Black: Yes. I was active as could be. We made a couple of forestry films, got an outfit in Chicago to make a couple of films of what was going on on the West Coast. With the help of Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company, we got the "Keep Minnesota Green" going very well, the third state to have "Keep Green." I represented Weyerhaeuser in innumerable association meetings. It seemed to me I was away from home half the time, attending meetings and so forth--going to Washington, where I was interested in the federal forestry legislation; but there wasn't very much of it that we were particularly interested in.

Fry: This was after...?

Black: That's after I left California.

Fry: You were not interested in federal legislation?

Black: Not in general...on anything relative to forestry, national legislation, I was very much interested and did what I could.

Fry: Was this about the time that there was still the possibility of federal regulation of cutting?

Black: No, that was dead because the improvement by the industry itself had eliminated the squawk. That is true of the Northwest, where they went to block cutting of the Douglas fir and here into selective logging in the pine. The redwood planting, on which I wrote so many articles, was abandoned because they found that there they could do it better with selective logging, and stump sprouts. Again the tractor helped there.

Fry: At Weyerhaeuser were you working closely with Mr. Orell?

Black: No, he wasn't there when I was with Weyerhaeuser.

Fry: Who was your immediate superior? You were a vice-president.

Black: I was a vice-president of the Weyerhaeuser Sales Company, not the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company out here. My immediate superior was F. K. Weyerhaeuser.

Fry: Would you like to describe him?

Black: One of the finest people I ever knew. He was very much interested in our films, which portrayed what the company was doing. I won't say the money was unlimited, but there was no scrimping or complaining about making a more elaborate picture if he thought it was going to be better than what we had before. These films were made to show forestry practice in the West.

Fry: Before service clubs, and so forth?

Black: Anyplace, yes. Primarily that. Wherever they wished them. That started in 1943, in September.

Fry: This was when you first went there.

Black: That's when I first went there. I stayed there until 1947, doing that same type of work.

Fry: You had three half-time jobs before you went to Weyerhaeuser?

Black: Before I went to Weyerhaeuser. It was a big surprise to Weyerhaeuser when they made their first offer to me, to hear me say I had three half-time jobs. They didn't know that. They knew what my salary was from the Forest Protective Association because they were members. They didn't realize that I had the labor relations work for the sugar pine group. And I also had half-time work, in theory, for the Michigan-California Lumber Company, as assistant to the manager at Camino.

Fry: What was his name?

Black: Swift Berry. I held these jobs right up to 1943.

And I would say that the third half of my time took place in the forties. I used to spend half of my time at Camino and half of my time with the Forest Protective, and the labor relations or negotiations came under my purview.

Black: At first the entire pine region had some government labor committee; they had meetings up at Portland, and some man from Spokane was chairman of it. And the labor boys had wanted California to pay the same wages that were paid in the Northwest. It was our California contention that the two weren't comparable, because of the difference in weather. We didn't log in the winter in the pine region, so they didn't need the heavy clothes, and so forth. It was a summertime job. The results were that when the question came up again on negotiations, the sugar pine group wanted me to handle their work.

Michigan-California at Camino was perfectly willing that I do it, being a sugar pine company. So I put in much less than half time then at Camino, but was credited with it. So actually, as far as salary was concerned, I had three half-time jobs. The hours were not quite distributed that way. When the Legislature met it was full-time in Sacramento for the Protective Association.

Fry: In California, who from labor did you do your negotiations with?

Black: That was the AF of L and CIO. We had the two unions. Whomever they appointed we'd meet, and talk with.

Fry: I was kind of under the impression that, in the Northwest at least, the AF of L eventually became the dominant union in the thirties and forties. Was that true down here?

Black: I rather doubt it. I think in the Northwest that the CIO is dominant now.

Fry: What was it like in California?

Black: When I left it was about fifty-fifty in the pine region. For instance, at Michigan-California we had an AF of L union in the box factory and in the sawmill; and we had CIO in the woods, which doubled the troubles as far as that's concerned.

Fry: You were here during some of that famous Pearl Harbor session of the Legislature, weren't you?

Black: Yes. At the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor I was en route from San Francisco to Portland to attend a Western Forestry and Conservation Association meeting. But I can't remember anything in connection with that that affected our forestry work.

Fry: I think it was the first time that really big appropriations were given to the state for forestry.

Black: Yes. We figured there was going to be lots of trouble with

Black: fires during the war. There was very little opposition to the increase because of general overall fear of fires.

There is one thing that is very interesting to me. The day I left California--(we were living in Piedmont) to go to St. Paul, in the fall of 1943, my wife and family left by taxi to go to the Southern Pacific depot in Oakland. I had an appointment with Governor Earl Warren in President Sproul's office at the University of California. They wanted my recommendations for members of the Board of Forestry. Sproul had vigorously supported that constitutional amendment that we had, changing the make-up of the Board of Forestry. I think that is the reason that he suggested to Governor Warren, who was a friend of his, that he see me.

I no longer had any ax to grind; I was leaving and they both knew it. The five men that I recommended were later appointed: Mr. Rosecrans, from southern California, whom I recommended as a real good possibility for chairman, was appointed chairman and served in that capacity as long as Governor Warren was in office. I am very proud of that, because he was no particular friend of mine. He was a southerner. That may not be a very politic thing to say. Anyway, after the meeting I caught the Southern Pacific at Berkeley and joined my family--almost missed the train.

Fry: Anything like this, that you feel you don't want to be included, can be put under seal for any length of time. Sometimes these things are under seal for as long as the people whom you are talking about are living.

Black: You do not need to seal.

Fry: I don't know of anything controversial about this.

Black: I don't either. I don't know of any reason in the world why he should be embarrassed, because Rosecrans did a swell job, and the others whom Warren appointed on my recommendation I think also worked out well. You see, the Board of Forestry is appointed to represent various interests, such as timber, farmers, and other things--agriculture, the southern California interests, and so forth. We had redwood, pine, southern California cattlemen, and representation-at-large. (That's as I remember, I may be pretty wrong in that, but it's close to that.) Anyway, the men from pine and redwood, the chairman and the two stockmen were appointed and never were changed as far as I know.

Georgia Pacific

Fry: Coming back to your subsequent career activities, you went from Weyerhaeuser down to the South, is that right?

Black: To Augusta, Georgia. To what was then the Georgia Hardwood Lumber Company and is now known as Georgia Pacific. One reason I left St. Paul was that I was given to understand that I would not have very much traveling to do there.

Fry: Did that work out?

Black: No. I was gone two-thirds of the time instead of half the time, more travel.

Fry: What was the nature of this job?

Black: I was the executive assistant to the president at the time I went there, and soon became vice-president. They had several sawmills scattered throughout the South, one plywood plant. Later they bought C. D. Johnson Lumber Company, out of Toledo, Oregon. It had an enormous sawmill. In 1949 I was transferred from there to Olympia. I was in charge of the western operations. That included the plywood plant at Bellingham, Washington; two plywood plants and a sawmill at Olympia; the Springfield Plywood Company, at Springfield, Oregon; and the C. D. Johnson Lumber Company, sawmill and timber, at Toledo, with the result that I was again on the road. Bellingham is a couple of hundred miles from Olympia. Springfield is something less than that. Toledo is about a couple of hundred miles or so. I soon found myself visiting at least one of those places pretty nearly every week for some problem or other. Then we built a plywood plant down at Toledo. It was a pretty busy deal.

Fry: This was quite a change, wasn't it, from your other type of job?

Black: Oh yes.

Fry: You were more or less starting a second career.

Black: That's right.

Fry: Did it work out to your advantage?

Black: Yes. I think for the experience, and I would say from a financial standpoint, regardless. I would have been retired on a very handsome salary basis from Weyerhaeuser--still be getting it had

Black: I not left there. I resigned as senior vice-president from Georgia Pacific; I felt the management had changed. They put in an army general as vice-chairman who knew very, very little about timber, lumber, plywood, or business, and I found it impossible. Some companies felt it was the thing to do to hire these retiring generals after the war.

Fry: Was your main disillusionment over any change in forestry practice?

Black: No, none whatever.

Fry: It was primarily business?

Black: Yes. Personal relations, really--my new superior.

Tri-State Plywood Company

Fry: Then you resigned from there, and that was when you came out here?

Black: And started a little plywood plant down at Santa Clara.

Fry: With whom did you start this?

Black: With the man who had been the president of the Bellingham Plywood Company, which Georgia Pacific bought, and with two or three other people.

Fry: What is his name?

Black: Olson, Victor Olson. The plant was very successful. We sold it in 1960.

Fry: I don't believe you've given me the name of this plywood plant.

Black: Tri-State Plywood Company. I can add one other thing, that I think you wouldn't want in this final statement but it is of interest to me. You remember that after I graduated from high school I had stayed out a year and worked at the Buick plant in Michigan. I worked there summers between school terms, with two exceptions. At that time we had piecework. You had an

Black: hourly rate and you also had--you're familiar with piecework rates?

Fry: Not the rates. I know what piecework is.

Black: That's a rate for each operation on the item produced, and the more you do the more you make. I had a rate, I think, of 22 1/2 cents an hour, a ten-hour day. And if I produced enough I could make 48 1/2 cents an hour, piecework, which was the maximum at that time. I'm talking about 1911. I learned from the older men what efficiency and the saving of motion can mean in production. But there's got to be an incentive for it.

When we established the Tri-State Plywood Company Mr. Olson was of the same opinion that I was, because he had worked under similar conditions piling lumber out on the West Coast when he first came over from Sweden. So we put in a bonus plan: we established a normal day's production at the key machine, and everything produced over that we paid an additional rate. Then on the overall plant production we established a norm, and anything over that we paid a bonus. In effect, we gave the men a little better than 50 per cent of anything extra that they could produce. It was paid at the end of every month. The result was we had the highest production per man per hour, per man per day, of any plywood plant on the Pacific Coast.

Fry: How was your personnel turnover?

Black: Very slight.

Fry: The men liked it?

Black: They liked it. The crew got rid of the loafers without having to bother the management. They made the guy so uncomfortable he'd quit. And very few did. Very small turnover. We had a good many Mexicans. People say they aren't good workers. I would say we had white folks that weren't as good as some of the Mexicans and some of the Mexicans not as good as others--one of the best men we had on the plugging machine was a Mexican boy. All in all, it worked out very well.

Fry: It depended on their own nature.

Black: That's exactly what it is, and the ability to make plans ahead and eliminate motions. Individual time and motion studies. I never had the job of efficiency expert at the Buick plant; I learned from the older men. And it's amazing what you can do to increase your production over what you might normally do--with little greater physical effort.

Fry: Was any help given to these men to help them toward greater efficiency of motion?

Black: Yes. Suggestions were made constantly as to how they could eliminate this, that, or the other. Sure. And the men in the plant were automatically helping the new men in ways to improve their work because it helped the overall plant production and meant a bigger bonus. I mean that was a greater satisfaction than the very nice profit we made when we sold it. Because some people from the Northwest would come down to see the plant, and they'd come out shaking their heads--wouldn't believe it. We posted every day, on a blackboard, what the production was.

Fry: I'd like to have any old graphs or anything you have around. Would you have any at all?

Black: I don't have any. The blackboard, of course, was erased. We'll say that the normal was six thousand feet per hour; ours would be up around nine thousand. We had three shifts--three crews--and each one wanted to beat the other. In addition to the bonus they were getting, they just wanted to be number one. And oh boy! It's the carrot in front of the pony all over again. And it worked beautifully.

Fry: Now that you're retired, what are your major activities?

Black: Disturbing my wife, mostly. [Laughter]

Fry: And talking to oral historians.

Black: That's a pretty rare deal. Oh, the garden, fooling around fixing things, seeing the grandchildren.

Fry: I was going to say, repairing your tables after grandchildren's visits? You showed me your project as I came in.

Black: Oh, that's part of it.

And one more thing. Now that I have retired, very few things give me as much pleasure as walking and driving through the private pine and redwood forests and seeing how very well they are being managed. Thinking back, I realize how much of this improvement in forest management is due to the efforts of C.F.P.A. while I was its secretary some twenty-five to almost forty-five years ago.

Fry: Well, thank you a lot for all the time you've spent on this.

Black: You're very welcome. I think a lot of it won't be of much interest at all.

S.R. Black

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